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JazzTimes

AMERICA'S JAZZ MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2015

ORNETTE COLEMAN

1930–2015

JAZZTIMES@45

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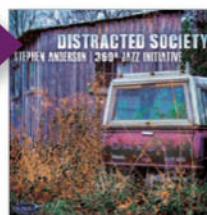
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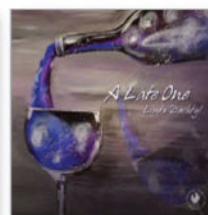
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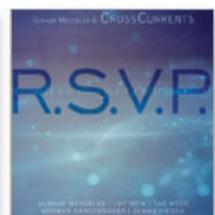
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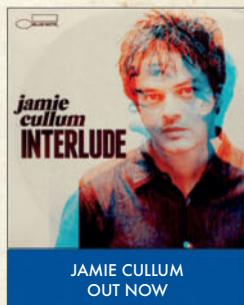


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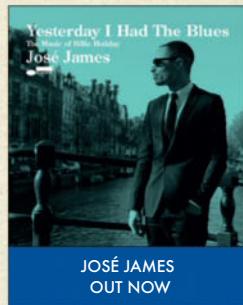
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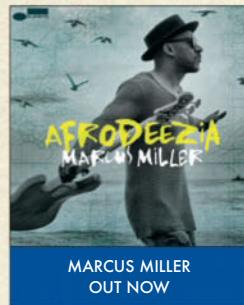
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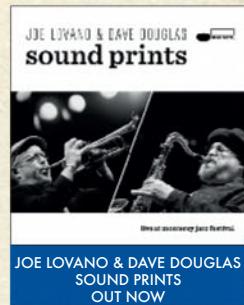
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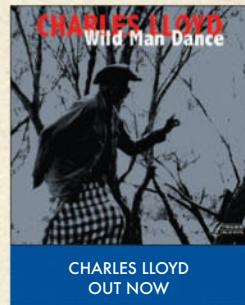
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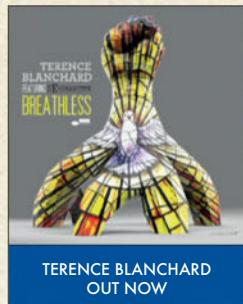
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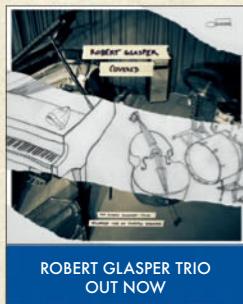
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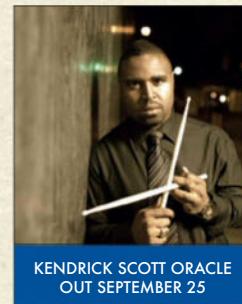
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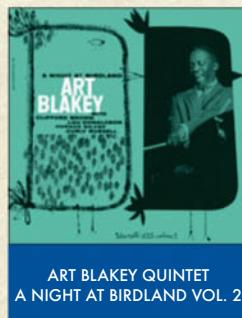


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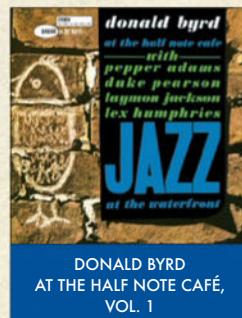


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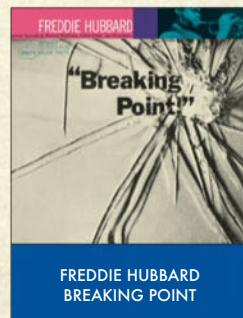
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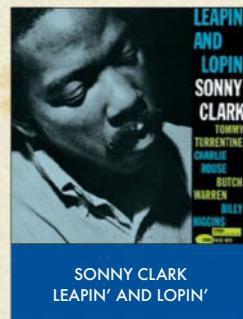
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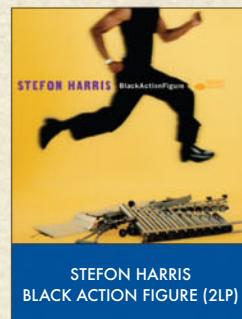
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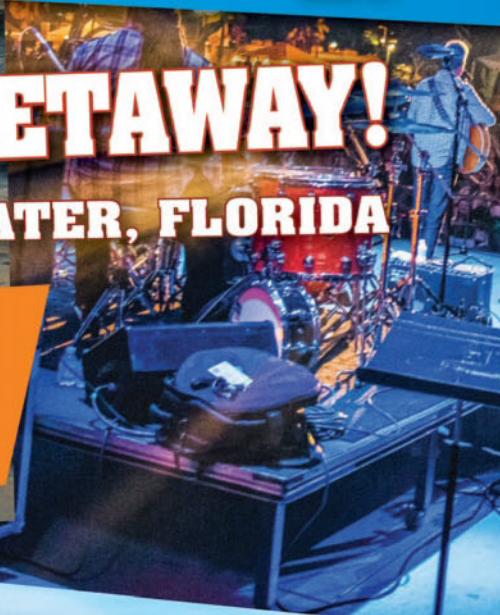


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Contact *JazzTimes* advertising sales department for reprint information.

JAZZTIMES EDITORIAL OFFICE
10801 Margate Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901

Subscriptions 1-877-252-8139 | Foreign Subscriptions 1-903-636-1120

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Madavor Media, LLC
25 Braintree Hill Office Park | Suite 404 | Braintree, MA | 02184
Tel: 617-706-9110 | Fax: 617-536-0102
JazzTimes (ISSN 0272-572-X) is published 10 times per year by Madavor Media, LLC.,
25 Braintree Hill Office Park, Suite 404, Braintree, MA 02184, USA, Tel: 617-706-9110.
Jeffrey C. Wolk, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1 year (10 issues), US \$29.99, Canada \$34.99, International \$54.99, Digital Only \$20.00

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *JazzTimes*, P.O. Box 4300, Big Sandy, TX 75755-4300. Subscribers allow 4-6 weeks for change of address to become effective. Subscriptions ordered are noncancelable and nonrefundable unless otherwise promoted. Return postage must accompany all manuscripts, drawings and photographs submitted if they are to be returned, and no responsibility can be assumed for unsolicited materials. All rights in letters sent to *JazzTimes* will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication and copyright purposes and as subject to unrestricted right to edit and to comment editorially. Requests for permission to reprint should be sent to the Permissions and Reprints Department. The title *JazzTimes* is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Contents copyright © 2015 by Madavor Media, LLC. All rights reserved. Nothing can be reprinted in whole or in part without permission from the publisher. Printed in the U.S.A.

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Forty-five Down

By Evan Haga

AT *JT*, THESE PAST FEW WEEKS HAVE BEEN A PERIOD OF focused, sometimes panicked reflection, and sadness. In mid-June, the avant-garde lost its North Star, saxophonist and composer Ornette Coleman. With our editorial deadline looming, we shuffled resources and schedules to make room for a tribute that could possibly do the man justice: a 2006 cover image by John Abbott, taken from the only official studio photo session *JT* ever conducted with the saxophonist; an elegant appreciation by our columnist, Nate Chinen, that explores Coleman's strong and abiding humanism; a roundup of remembrances by a handful of his colleagues and acolytes; and my own coverage of his historic public funeral in New York. As veteran *JT* readers know, we reserve tributes to deceased musicians for our March issue, a measure that prevents the magazine from resembling a newspaper obituaries section. But there are exceptions for jazz deities.

It isn't surprising that Coleman and his ingenious quartet also figure into "45 for 45," the anniversary feature that had been picked as this month's cover story prior to his passing. We do an anniversary book every five years, and it's always work to look forward to—generally a conceptual, thoughtful, nostalgic alternative to the usual

business of new releases and cresting trends. In 2010, for instance, we homed in on three monumental albums from the year of our founding, 1970. This year, we put our much-practiced poll-taking skills to the test, quizzing dozens of critics and musicians, from all stylistic corners, to come up with a countdown of the 45 Greatest Small Groups from throughout the jazz timeline.

Before you start in on another angry email about how jazz is art and life, man, not the NFL, check out the piece. For us jazz nerds who've been bantering about this stuff since ninth-grade lab band, it's an intriguing read. Our pitch asked the polltakers to consider the strategies and dynamics at play within the group rather than the technical strengths of the leader, so certain godlike musicians might seem underrepresented—until you remember that they never really immersed themselves in an enduring unit; other players who inspire a double take, the journeymen and out-cats, made the cut because of their devotion to an ensemble identity. If nothing else, the list proves that no matter how many one-off all-star confabs are concocted by promoters and producers, nothing exhibits jazz's defining principle of democracy better than a working band. **JT**

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► The Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes Jr. honors Coleman at the Riverside Church in June

Departed Saint of Soul

ORNETTE COLEMAN IS EULOGIZED, AND HUMANIZED, IN NEW YORK CITY

Public funeral services for musicians as revered and influential as Ornette Coleman, the alto saxophonist and composer who died on June 11 at age 85, can make for precarious planning. The natural temptation would be to turn the event into a hit parade featuring high-profile acolytes—at which point a day of mourning becomes a source of entertainment and the requisite respect is lost.

Coleman's service, which stretched well beyond three hours at an impressively filled Riverside Church in New York on Saturday, June 27, struck a reverent balance between a celebration of his art and the realization that a beloved man is gone. There was probably a surplus of speakers, but most of them tended to bring necessary perspectives. More important, they succeeded in humanizing an artist who was

mythologized—both by himself and by the culture around him—throughout the majority of his life.

Platitudes and other received wisdom, repeated over and over throughout the decades, can obscure the truth about a human being rather than illuminate it, so some of the simplest and most casual remembrances here were often the most revelatory. We heard about Coleman's penchant for shooting pool using his own explorative set of rules. From two family friends, Anton Wong and Nathaniel Phillips, we learned of how this major figure in 20th-century music invited his son's pals along on family trips, treating them with the generosity of a benevolent uncle. During an address from Coleman's son (and drummer) Denardo Coleman, we laughed at how his father's open-door policy turned their Manhattan home into a kind of artists' flophouse. A trio

of journalists—Howard Mandel, Larry Blumenfeld and Herb Boyd—paid tribute to an interviewee whose sweetness and willingness to participate more than made up for his cosmic indirectness.

Early on, Coleman's selflessness, and his core belief that humans are inherently good, formed a through line that never let up. Movingly, the poet, activist and politician Felipe Luciano contrasted his own past in black militancy with Coleman's globally minded idealism—his “war” against the musician’s “God,” as the virtuoso orator put it. Another arc had to do with Coleman's singular wit, otherworldly yet bound to a kind of personal logic; each speaker seemed to harbor at least one quotation or story that evoked both ancient yogis and Yogi Berra. But again they folded back into a theme of earthly community. The composer, pianist and vibraphonist Karl Berger recalled

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Hearsay

Ornette Coleman's funeral in NYC, Maria Schneider, *The Jazz Palace* by Mary Morris, the jazz-infused opera *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*, news and farewells

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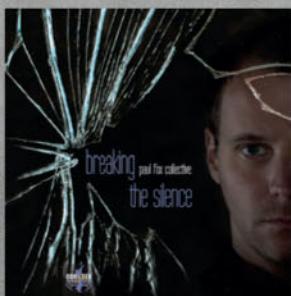
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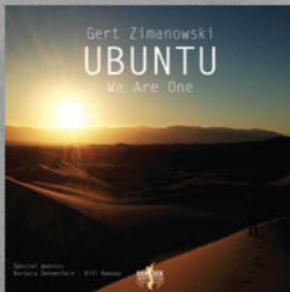
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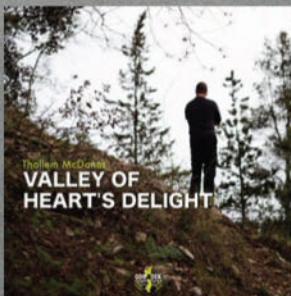
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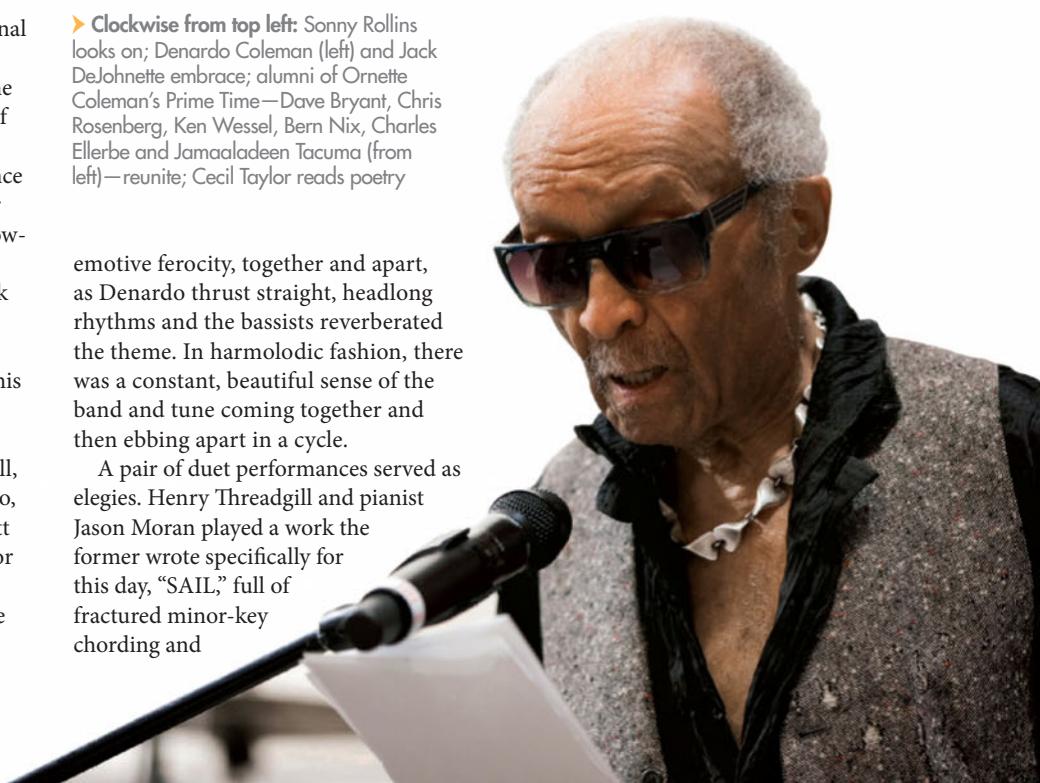
PHOTOS BY ALAN NAHGBAN



► Clockwise from top left: Sonny Rollins looks on; Denardo Coleman (left) and Jack DeJohnette embrace; alumni of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time—Dave Bryant, Chris Rosenberg, Ken Wessel, Bern Nix, Charles Ellerbe and Jamaaladeen Tacuma (from left)—reunite; Cecil Taylor reads poetry

emotive ferocity, together and apart, as Denardo thrust straight, headlong rhythms and the bassists reverberated the theme. In harmolodic fashion, there was a constant, beautiful sense of the band and tune coming together and then ebbing apart in a cycle.

A pair of duet performances served as elegies. Henry Threadgill and pianist Jason Moran played a work the former wrote specifically for this day, "SAIL," full of fractured minor-key chording and



somber, lingering melody mitigated by Threadgill's soothing tone on bass flute. Ravi Coltrane, commanding on soprano saxophone, took Coleman's "Peace" far away from its head, into improv territory usually reserved for solo-sax recitals, as pianist Geri Allen outlined the harmony artfully, sparingly underneath. (Per Schaap's explanation, jazz history was in serious play here, and had come full circle: Ravi's iconic father specifically requested Coleman perform at his more private funeral service in 1967.) A third duo pairing, drummer Jack DeJohnette and the jazz-indebted tap dancer Savion Glover, loosened the sobriety and communicated the joy so integral to Coleman's art.

Closer to the advent of the jazz avant-garde was Pharoah Sanders, who blew unaccompanied on tenor sax, his mighty sonics floating toward the top of the covered renovation scaffolding that occupied the front of the church. Cecil Taylor delivered something like one of his solo performances in miniature: He began with poetry, escalated from slight clusters to his rumbling trademarks at the piano, and then finished with more phonetically audacious verse. (Taylor's presence, along with that of speakers Yoko Ono and the sculptor Melvin Edwards, served as reminders of Coleman's eminence and influence outside of jazz proper, and argued that he's part of the general conversation about the 20th-century avant-garde, alongside the likes of Varèse and Picasso.)

Like one of Coleman's impeccably circuitous compositions, this service ended thematically where it began, with a knockout eulogy from Dr. James A. Forbes Jr., reverend at the Riverside Church, that lifted up the musician's message of human goodwill. In its most affecting passage, Forbes engaged directly with the casket, laying the criticism and naysaying he's encountered in his own career aside the violent pushback Coleman received en route to transforming the jazz language. To be reminded of Coleman's hardships was a welcome message; in this cathedral, with so many brilliant and famous people singing his praises and looking on (including Sonny Rollins), it was easy to forget the friction he withstood—with unflagging grace and empathy—to get here. **EVAN HAGA**

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Playing the Field

FOR HER ORCHESTRA'S FIRST ALBUM IN EIGHT YEARS, COMPOSER-ARRANGER MARIA SCHNEIDER RETURNS TO THE MIDWESTERN COUNTRYSIDE OF HER CHILDHOOD

Maria Schneider, 54, has always drawn inspiration from the natural world and from her Midwestern upbringing, but on *The Thompson Fields* (ArtistShare), those elements come together in a vibrantly pastoral, movingly impressionistic portrait of a vanishing landscape. *The Thompson Fields* is the first album from Schneider's acclaimed orchestra in eight years, during which time she continued performing and collaborated with soprano Dawn Upshaw and David Bowie.

The new album pays homage to a neighboring farm where the composer spent much of her childhood in southwest Minnesota, a sparse but beautiful prairie far removed from the crowded urban snarl of New York City, where she lives now. The disc is housed in a hardbound package nearly as gorgeous as the music within, featuring photographs of Schneider visiting the Thompson farm along with paintings of birds-of-paradise by John James Audubon and vintage maps of Minnesota and the upper Mississippi.

Most bandleaders claim to write with specific musicians in mind, but the longevity of Schneider's ensemble translates to an unparalleled sense of how to compose for soloists and maintain a cohesive vision. That's evident from the outset, with an adaptation of "Walking by Flashlight," from 2013's Upshaw project, *Winter Morning Walks*, with Scott Robinson's lyrical alto clarinet speaking with the clarity and narrative arc of a master storyteller. "Arbiters of Evolution," inspired by the showy plumage of those birds from the Audubon artwork, embeds the robust playing of Robinson (on baritone saxophone) and Donny McCaslin (on tenor) in a bristling, preening concerto. Another album highlight, "A Potter's Song," a tribute to the late trumpeter and longtime orchestra member Laurie Frink, is intimate and delicate in its collective lamentation.

WHAT DID THE THOMPSON FARM MEAN TO YOU GROWING UP?

Many of the best parts of my childhood I associate with the Thompsons. I grew up on the outskirts of the small town of Windom, and the Thompson family and my family were very close friends. We spent quite a lot of time out there. They were wonderful people who lived life in a very big way. They had a deep appreciation for nature and the outdoors; birds and wildlife were a huge part of their life, as they are mine. All sorts of really interesting people came to the farm from all over the world, even though this was a tiny rural town. So it was a world that felt big and open to me growing up in this small town on the plains.

NATURE SEEMS TO BE A CONSTANT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR YOUR MUSIC.

It's a big part of my life. I'm a believer that whatever your artistic medium, it's bound to reflect what's in your life. For me, the part of the world that makes me feel a sense of wonder is the natural world. That's what makes my jaw drop and makes me feel like expressing music. I've never been a person who's in love with music just as music. I've always loved music that's a conduit for something.

THE THOMPSON FIELDS CERTAINLY ISN'T OVERTLY POLITICAL, BUT IS THERE AN ENVIRONMENTAL MESSAGE TO THE ALBUM?

You can't really preach to people and get anywhere. It's more about sharing what I love and hoping that it excites people to be curious about it if they're not already, or if they are, to remind them. A lot of what's wrong with this world is that people don't feel inspired. Having a computer or doing things in a big city can be fun and inspiring in a lot of ways, but there's no connectedness to

life and existence, like when you're out encountering many forms of life and faced with bigger questions.

YOU BROUGHT THE MEMBERS OF THE ORCHESTRA TO THE FARM AND YOUR HOMETOWN. WHAT IMPRESSION DID THAT TRIP MAKE ON THEM?

The sheer vastness and emptiness of it was a bit of a shock. But hanging out at this old, beautiful farm, with Tony [Thompson, a longtime friend] making antelope on the fireplace and flan in an old cast-iron kettle, I think they could all see why I love that place so much. Playing in Windom, I remember [orchestra pianist] Frank Kimbrough being amazed that the whole foundation of my life was sitting there in that audience. So much of my music has been autobiographical, so when we would perform pieces like



"Scenes From Childhood" or "The Pretty Road" and I would talk about those pieces, you could see in the faces of the audience how much they related to everything. The guys were amazed that after so many years I could go back there and it all still existed, and that there was a collective knowing and remembering and nostalgia for those same things and people.

YOU'VE WORKED WITH SOME OF THESE MUSICIANS FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS. WHAT IMPACT DOES THAT HAVE ON YOUR WRITING FOR THE ORCHESTRA?

What it does for me as a writer is difficult to know because it's so subliminal. You talk to people differently because of your relationship to them; you might talk to your mother one way, a very close friend another way, and you'd talk to me a different way

because you don't know me. When you know the other person, you know that you can get away with a certain trust or confidence or sarcasm. Writing music and working with musicians, it's the same thing.

YOU'VE ALSO ENJOYED A LONG ASSOCIATION WITH THE CROWDFUNDING PLATFORM ARTISTSHARE. BEYOND SIMPLY ALLOWING YOU TO FUND YOUR PROJECTS, WHAT ADVANTAGES HAVE YOU FOUND IN THAT MODEL?

That's another thing that's almost impossible to answer because it's such a huge part of my life now. I've met so many wonderful people that enjoy being a part of the making of this music in a very big and generous way. It feels like I'm making music for real people, as opposed to just making a recording and throwing it out into the world.

YOU'VE BEEN A PIONEER IN THE CROWDFUNDING OF MUSIC, BUT YOU'VE ALSO BEEN VOCAL IN YOUR OPPOSITION TO STREAMING MUSIC SERVICES. DO YOU FEEL WE'RE AT A CROSSROADS IN TERMS OF HOW THE DIGITAL REALM IS AFFECTING MUSICIANS?

One of the biggest problems to me is that musicians don't stand up and say, "I want to choose my own destiny. I want to tell people what my music costs." Streaming isn't about selling music, it's about selling ads and data. That concept is dangerous, because you're training an audience to think that music is free content for other purposes. So any musician that allows a publisher to throw their music up there where it's anybody's guess whether you're going to make anything from it is just insanity; it's self-destructive and cannibalistic.

SHAUN BRADY



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 JAZZ

"The Most Alive Place"

A RECENT NOVEL MINES CHICAGO JAZZ HISTORY TO TELL A TALE OF AMERICAN SELF-TRANSFORMATION

In his 1914 poem "Chicago," Carl Sandburg celebrates the life of what he memorably dubbed the "City of the Big Shoulders": the stockyards, the railroads, the gangsters, the "Building, breaking, rebuilding." While Mary Morris' affecting new novel, *The Jazz Palace* (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday), reprises most of the poet's catalog of urban dynamism, it's what he leaves out—jazz—that Morris places at the heart of a story set in Chicago during the 1920s.

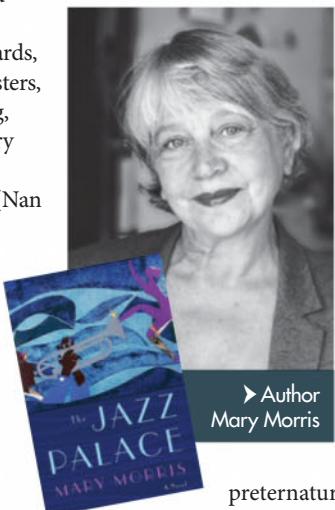
It was an era when

the city was being transformed by waves of Eastern-European immigrants, fleeing poverty and pogroms, who crowded the tenements of the city's North Side, and by African-Americans from the South, escaping Jim Crow and the lynch mobs, who settled on the South Side. The character she created to serve as a bridge between these two sides of the city, Benny Lehrman, is the teenage son of a smalltime Jewish manufacturer who makes caps for the local hotel workers and meat packers.

One evening, Benny, a preternaturally talented piano student,

ditches his weekly classical lesson and heads instead to the South Side. Drawn to the thrilling sounds coming from the dozens of dives that line State Street (a.k.a. "The Stroll"), he approaches an African-American pianist who has just stepped outside for a break: "I was wondering, that music, what's it called?" ... "I haven't heard anything like it before." ... *The man gave him a grin. "It's called jazz."*

Like E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* (which Morris, a Rome Prize winner, acknowledges as a powerful inspiration), *The Jazz Palace* adopts an exciting new form of American music, grounded in African-American culture, as the soundtrack for a complex work of fiction. She also adopts Doctorow's innovative technique of bringing together a cast of fully realized fictional characters



► Author
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Photo: Hiroyuki Ito

LARRY O'CONNOR

with an array of contemporary historical figures. In Morris' case, these include, among many others, Al Capone, Rudolph Valentino, Shoeless Joe Jackson, King Oliver and Louis Armstrong.

In a recent interview with *JT*, the Chicago-born author described her extensive research into the history of the era and its music, including the library of jazz books she read and the wealth of anecdotes she collected from jazz aficionados. She even dusted off her own long-neglected piano skills by taking four years of lessons with jazz pianist Roberta Piket, a Brooklyn neighbor at the time. "I think the only thing I learned to play was 'Blue Monk,'" confessed Morris, 68. "I never got to the point where I could really improvise."

But Morris' greatest challenge proved to be the creation of a character who, along with Benny Lehrman, would become a central figure in the novel's fictional world. "I thought, how can I write about the music that was coming into this book," she reflected, "and how can I write about the South Side of Chicago and not have a black

character?" As Morris was wrestling with these issues, she passed a largely African-American housing project on her way to the airport and glimpsed a tag in black graffiti: "Rest in Peace Napoleon Hill." As Morris recounted it, "By the time I got to the airport, he was a trumpeter, he had come from New Orleans, he had this whole life."

While there are times when the fruits of Morris' research take on a dutiful box-ticking quality, just as often the details she appropriates from jazz history and mythology serve to enrich her story. In the case of Napoleon Hill, for example, Morris mines the legend of New Orleans cornetist Freddie Keppard—who supposedly turned down the chance to record and occasionally used a handkerchief to cover his fingerings so no one could "steal his stuff"—as a way of reinforcing Hill's artistic integrity and refusal to be exploited.

In fact, it's when Hill decides to break out of the South Side's musical ghetto that he stumbles upon an under-the-radar North Side bar owned by the Chimbrowas (another Jewish immigrant family

who provide the third leg of the novel's fictional triangle). And it's Hill who, struck by the room's shabby chic and its miraculously in-tune piano, gives the bar its name: the Jazz Palace. It's also here that Hill encounters Benny Lehrman, now a virtuoso jazz pianist in his own right, and it's here, as they jam together, that they transcend, if only briefly, the racial segregation of the era.

Morris is careful not to idealize these moments of racial harmony, but she does communicate the freedom at the heart of jazz powerfully, revealing how it provided musicians, both black and white, the opportunity to express an individuality that transcended race. Though she is quick to acknowledge that Chicago "was by no means Paradise," Morris offers a portrait of the city as a stage where, for a decade or so, the great American drama of self-transformation was played out as nowhere else. Or as Morris put it at one point in our interview, "For a moment in time, it was the most alive place for music in the world."

DAVID KASTIN

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Bird-of-Purgatory

CHARLIE PARKER'S SYMPHONIC AMBITIONS AND INNER TORMENT DRIVE A COMPELLING NEW OPERA



► Tenor Lawrence Brownlee portrays Charlie Parker in Philadelphia

Charlie Parker's desire to explore the crossroads of jazz and modern classical music, including the innovations of Stravinsky and Varèse, has become an integral part of his legend. *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*, the new opera that premiered in June, running for five sold-out performances under the auspices of Opera Philadelphia, is not an attempt to realize those ambitions, exactly, but it does depict a fantastical last attempt at Bird's "jazz symphony" via a classical opera with bebop accents.

Parker is already deceased when the opera begins. The piece is set in a black-on-black noir Birdland, a nightclub purgatory where Bird's spirit spends the two days that Parker's body sat unidentified in the morgue. He's determined to use that time to compose his symphonic masterwork, but memories of his tragic life continually intrude, distracting him from the task at hand.

Swiss-born composer Daniel Schnyder is a saxophonist who regularly melds the jazz and classical idioms in his work, making the elusive Parker symphony a personally compelling framework for the piece. "The whole opera is about the dream of Charlie Parker to bridge these two worlds, something that was historically true," says Schnyder, who spoke to Third Stream pioneer Gunther Schuller about that

topic just months before Schuller's death. "It's a very unnatural situation to have two or three music worlds separate from each other. You can compare it to having some books written with the letters A to M and other books written with the letters from N to Z. That would be a really stupid divide, but music is divided a little bit like that. It doesn't make any sense."

Charlie Parker's Yardbird was devised as a vehicle for bel canto tenor Lawrence Brownlee, whose supple, soaring voice Schnyder recognized as an ideal analogue to Parker's saxophone. At Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, Brownlee expressed Bird's lines with sharp agility, occasionally erupting with a scat run or infusing a lyrical melody with a touch of jazz tempo, linking bop and Rossini effortlessly. "Most of what I sing is Rossini and Donizetti, music that people would consider virtuosic," Brownlee says. "You can look at the music of Charlie Parker and see the virtuosity in it, so Daniel thought it would be a good idea to marry his life story and his brilliance in the jazz medium with a voice like mine that is fluid and flexible. That bel canto repertoire is written out but it should sound improvisational, spur-of-the-moment, so I have to think of myself as a jazz musician and have a great deal of flexibility and freedom with what I'm doing."

The libretto was written by poet and play-

wright Bridgette Wimberly, whose uncle had been a saxophonist who emulated both Bird's playing and his heroin addiction—thus earning Parker the eternal enmity of Wimberly's grandmother. "It was interesting to go back and research a guy who wasn't spoken highly of in my youth," Wimberly says. "I knew he was a genius on the saxophone and I knew the time period he was born in, but all the other stuff I had to research and get into my own DNA until I could find the story to tell."

That story ended up unexpectedly focusing on the women in Bird's life: three of his wives, his mother and the Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter, the jazz patroness in whose apartment Parker died. The only other primary male character in the opera is Dizzy Gillespie, played by baritone Will Liverman, who hopelessly attempts to rescue his friend and partner from the lure of heroin.

Each of the wives comes to represent a different period in Parker's life: Chrystal Williams' Rebecca his impoverished beginnings, Angela Mortellaro's Doris his arrival in New York City and Rachel Sterrenberg's Chan his rising fame, tinged with the devastating loss of their daughter, Pree. The standout performance of the show, however, was Angela Brown as Bird's mother, Addie Parker, who warns her son against the temptations of the "Devil's music" and mourns his decline in a soprano voice that combined operatic expressivity with blues power.

Schnyder wisely chose not to dilute the opera by asking the Opera Philadelphia Orchestra to imitate jazz musicians, but he nonetheless conjured a jazz feel throughout the 90-minute piece. In some cases that was literal, with familiar melodies woven into the score: Nica (Tamara Mumford) enters to Monk's "Pannonica"; the specter of Bird's wheelchair-bound dealer appears to an ominous arrangement of "Moose the Mooche"; Chan's line "on the wrong side of midnight" triggers a hint of "Round Midnight." But less obviously, the bop milieu is suggested in the acute twists of melody and the hectic, syncopated rhythms that drive the score, and Parker's early days are laced with blues and gospel touches.

While there are less successful moments—Parker's stint at Camarillo State Hospital is depicted with stage hokum like strobe lights and funhouse music, with straitjacketed patients shuffling like zombies—the opera is both sensitive and compelling. It's also an apt tribute to Bird's frustrated ambitions and influential achievements.

SHAUN BRADY

Farewells

Ornette Coleman, the alto saxophonist and composer who led the jazz avant-garde while also revolutionizing the music's mainstream, died June 11 in Manhattan. The cause of death was cardiac arrest. Coleman was 85. For more on the music and legacy of this jazz giant, see this issue's cover story beginning on p. 26 and coverage of Coleman's funeral on p. 10.

Gunther Schuller, a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, conductor, musician, writer and educator best known as the architect of the Third Stream, a concept and term he created in 1957 to describe the fusing of jazz and classical music, died June 21 in Boston. The cause was leukemia. He was 89.

Masabumi Kikuchi, a lyrical, emotive pianist who played

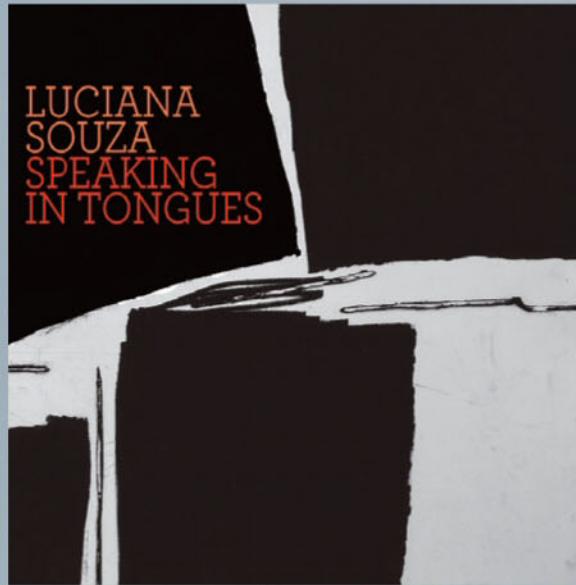
with Lionel Hampton, Sonny Rollins, Joe Henderson, Elvin Jones, Gil Evans and others before recording affecting dates with drummer Paul Motian and bassist Gary Peacock, died July 6 on Long Island. The cause was subdural hematoma. He was 75.

Hal Gaylor, a bassist who worked with such artists as Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, Chico Hamilton, Lena Horne, Judy Garland, Oscar Peterson and Charlie Parker, died June 25 following a long illness. He was 85.

Harold Battiste, a composer, producer, arranger and musician who was involved with dozens of hit records and worked with Sam Cooke, Dr. John, Ellis Marsalis and others, died June 19 at his home in New Orleans after a long illness. Battiste was 83.

News from JazzTimes.com

- ▶ In June, the Blue Note Entertainment Group announced the impending opening of new Blue Note Jazz Club venues in Beijing and Waikiki, Hawaii. The organization owns, manages and licenses 10 music spaces around the globe, including the Blue Note Jazz Clubs in New York, Japan and Milan. Additional locations will open in Shanghai and Taipei, Taiwan, within the next three years.
- ▶ Jazz at Lincoln Center recently launched a companion record label through Sony Music, Blue Engine Records, described in a press release as "a new platform to make [JALC's] vast archive of recorded concerts available to jazz audiences everywhere." The label will also release new live and studio recordings.
- ▶ In June, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation announced the recipients of its 2015 Doris Duke Impact Awards, including seven jazz-oriented musician-composers, each of whom received an unrestricted gift of \$80,000: pianist Kris Davis, bassist Mark Dresser, drummer Milford Graves, pianist Matt Mitchell, drummer Tyshawn Sorey, saxophonist and flutist Henry Threadgill and bassist Reggie Workman.
- ▶ Sonny Rollins will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Jazz Foundation of America at the organization's 14th annual "A Great Night in Harlem" event on Oct. 22 at the Apollo Theater. The evening will also include a special tribute to the late B.B. King.
- ▶ Pianist Bill Charlap has been appointed director of the jazz studies program at William Paterson University in Wayne, N.J.



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ANTONIO SANCHEZ

IN SEARCH OF THE SINGULAR

By Aidan Levy

After garnering well-deserved acclaim for his largely improvised solo drum score to the 2014 film *Birdman* or (*The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance*)—just not from the Academy, which excluded the innovative work based on a technicality—Antonio Sanchez released two CAM Jazz albums, his fourth and fifth as a leader. *Three Times Three* showcases three distinct trios: with pianist Brad Mehldau and bassist Matt Brewer; with guitarist John Scofield and bassist Christian McBride; and with saxophonist Joe Lovano and bassist John Patitucci. The 43-year-old Mexican-born drummer has established a reputation as an accomplished trio player, perhaps most notably in the Pat Metheny Trio alongside McBride, but on this album he proves his bona fides as a composer, bolstering his rhythmic sensibility with deft, subtly crafted lyricism.

The Meridian Suite, Sanchez's ambitious five-movement piece for his working quartet, Migration, boasts melodies that delve even deeper into complex harmony. Equally inspired by his experiences with *Birdman* and touring with Metheny in Meridian, Miss., the nearly hour-long suite captures a cinematic tonal palette with electric and acoustic elements. *Meridian* features Seamus Blake on tenor saxo-

phone and EWI, John Escreet on piano and Fender Rhodes and Matt Brewer on acoustic and electric bass, as well as guitarist Adam Rogers and vocalist Thana Alexa.

Sanchez recently took a rare break from his busy touring schedule to sit down for this listening session at his home in the Jackson Heights neighborhood in Queens.

1. Max Roach

“Drums Unlimited” (from *Drums Unlimited*, Atlantic). Roach, drums. Recorded in 1966.

BEFORE: The beginning sounds like the beginning of “YYZ” from Rush, but it sounds like an older guy from the vocabulary. He knows what he’s doing—definitely. Some of it sounds like Max.

AFTER: I’m pretty sure I’ve heard it, but he’s obviously Max. When I do clinics, I always give them an example of the perfect question-and-answer technique for building solos, and I usually use “For Big Sid” [another solo performance from *Drums Unlimited*] to exemplify that. That one I think is more well

known than this. It's interesting, because usually when I think of Max I think of ultimate control and finesse. Of course, there's tons of that here, but sometimes he kind of goes wild, which is really cool to hear.

2. Led Zeppelin

“Moby Dick” (from *Led Zeppelin II*, Atlantic). Jimmy Page, guitar; John Paul Jones, bass; John Bonham, drums. Recorded in 1969.

BEFORE: My man Bonham on “Moby Dick.” John was one of my earliest influences, and I’m very glad he was, because his feel and pocket are still something that I’m always trying to find—that relaxed, laidback feeling, but super groovy. Some people play behind the beat and it feels like it drags, but he plays behind the beat and it’s so groovy. Also, they were way ahead of their time—the whole band. [Learning Zeppelin’s music was] one of the first times I started playing odd time signatures, but it’s always rooted in the blues, which makes it the perfect combination. And the open solos he would take are very ahead of his time. Bonham was a beast, a monster, so experimental. Some of it sounds like Max almost. It’s pretty audacious to put a drum solo that long on an album like that.

Sometimes in rock bands nowadays they have that drum sound that seems a little generic to me. That’s why I miss Bonham so much, Stewart Copeland, guys that have a completely signature sound right off the bat. I think that’s really hard to get in rock these days. It’s a little watered down, and there are great drummers, but this is a different level. Even without accompaniment you can tell just from his sound who it is, and that’s really hard to do. He had tons of chops too. The way he builds the solo, obviously he knows what he’s doing. He definitely knows about composition. Yeah, you can’t go wrong with that.

3. Billy Cobham

“Prime Time” (from *Reflected Journey*, Purple Pyramid). Cobham, drums; Joe Chindamo, piano; Ira Coleman, bass. Recorded in 1992.

BEFORE: It reminds me of Mahavishnu. Very fusion-y sound.

AFTER: That’s probably why it sounded like Mahavishnu, because of Billy. I wanted to say Billy, but I wasn’t sure. It’s very fusion-y, but it’s swinging in its own way. From the sound of the cymbal, you can tell it’s not a straight-ahead guy. Very pingy and bright, and then that china [cymbal]—not too many people have the balls to use that china like that. And that single-stroke roll is legendary. It’s very basic, but Billy’s such a force of nature. Sometimes with fusion drummers the interaction is a little weird to me, but Billy’s interaction I think comes more from jazz. He’s very melodic, but that bass drum sound—his thing is more fusion. A lot of fusion guys are not very melodic, but he really plays with the toms as though they were a melodic instrument.

This is great because the sound is different, but you can tell he knows the vocabulary. I also love using two snare drums; it’s a lot of fun.

4. Dewa Budjana

“Lamboya” (from *Surya Namaskar*, Moonjune). Budjana, guitar; Jimmy Johnson, bass; Vinnie Colaiuta, drums. Recorded in 2013.

BEFORE: Some of it sounds a little like Rush to me. The sound of the drum is very fusion-y—very quiet hi-hat and high-pitched snare. If it’s recorded recently, it sounds a little dated to me. It’s well played, but this would have been cool like 15 years ago.

AFTER: That’s Vinnie? I know about that album. I did a record with Dewa. He’s a bad dude. He can play, but because his music is very fusion-y, it depends on which musicians he’s using. That can completely change the aura of the music. And because Jimmy and Vinnie are consummate fusion players, it sounds very fusion-y. What always amazes me about Vinnie is that you think you know his style and vocabulary and you hear something else [he played on] and you can’t tell who it is. For example, on [Herbie Hancock’s Joni Mitchell tribute record, *River: The Joni Letters*, from 2007], I couldn’t recognize Vinnie at all. On that record he holds back and his sound is very different. He plays cymbals with sizzle, which he never does. So he’s very chameleon-like, but he’s one of the baddest dudes ever. That double bass drum—if I had waited until now, I would have known. That’s Vinnie.

5. Jack DeJohnette

“Museum of Time” (from *Made in Chicago*, ECM). DeJohnette, drums; Roscoe Mitchell, Henry Threadgill, saxophones; Muhal Richard Abrams, piano; Larry Gray, bass. Recorded in 2013.

BEFORE: It’s cool. I like it. It’s unpredictable. Was this recorded recently? They’re taking their time. It’s very dramatic. Does he go to sticks at some point? It’s like different movements of the same piece. It’s very loose. Some of it reminds me of Jack.

AFTER: I like it when drummers write stuff that almost has absolutely nothing to do with our instrument. He’s barely playing in the introduction. When somebody goes to sticks, it’s a lot easier to tell. As soon as he started playing the cymbal in time, I knew it was Jack. I admire Jack’s desire to really improvise. He’s one guy I can recognize the sound of, but it’s almost impossible to imitate for me. I can recognize the licks of pretty much any drummer except Jack, but because of that he’s so recognizable.

6. Francisco Mora Catlett

“Wemilere” (from *Afro Horn MX*, AACE). Mora Catlett, drums; JD Allen, Vincent Bowens, tenor saxophones; Alex

"I LIKE IT WHEN DRUMMERS WRITE STUFF
THAT ALMOST HAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING
TO DO WITH OUR INSTRUMENT."

Harding, baritone saxophone; Aruán Ortiz, piano; Roman Diaz, percussion. Recorded in 2012.

BEFORE: It's cool because it's got a really loose feel, but with the percussion it kind of fits well. Since he's kind of just keeping time, it's hard to know.

AFTER: It's interesting, because it's not that it sounds dated, because the sounds are not dated, but the approach is very vampy. Vamping can work—these are good soloists—but it's the Coltrane-Elvin approach. That's a delicate spot to go, because it so automatically reminds you of something else that it's hard to put your own signature on it.

7. Cédric Hanriot

"Louisiana" (from *French Stories*, Plus Loin/Harmonia Mundii). Hanriot, piano, keyboards, programming; John Patitucci, bass; Terri Lyne Carrington, drums; Benjamin Powell, violin; Patrick Owen, cello. Recorded in 2011.

BEFORE: It sounds a little bit like Mike Clark. The snare sounds a lot like Mike Clark, with a lot of ghost notes.

AFTER: Terri Lyne is another one. She's kind of chameleon-like sometimes. I've played with Patitucci so much, and I know his playing, but here it reminded me of the Mike Clark-Paul Jackson vibe. It's not a bad thing to sound like.

8. Dafnis Prieto Sextet

"Triangles and Circles" (from *Triangles and Circles*, Dafnison). Prieto, drums; Mike Rodriguez, trumpet; Felipe Lamoglia, alto saxophone; Peter Apfelbaum, tenor saxophone; Manuel Valera, piano; Johannes Weidenmueller, bass. Recorded in 2015.

BEFORE: It sounds like Dafnis. I like Dafnis, because a lot of Cuban drummers tend to sound fusion-y to me, in the vocabulary but especially in the sound of the drums. And I like Dafnis because he sounds more organic, more acoustic. I guess you could call the music he writes fusion, because obviously it fuses a bunch of different things, but it's his own thing. Recently we did an all-star thing at the Puerto Rico [Heineken JazzFest], and it was Giovanni [Tommaso], me and Dafnis, in a little row and we played together. It was a lot of fun.

9. Nir Felder

"Slower Machinery" (from *Golden Age*, OKeh). Felder, guitar; Aaron Parks, piano; Matt Penman, bass; Nate Smith, drums. Recorded in 2011.

BEFORE: Right off the bat it sounds like Kurt Rosenwinkel to me, but I don't usually hear Kurt doing a lot of odd time signatures. He uses them sparingly. It sounds like [guitarist] Mike Moreno a little bit. Could that be Henry Cole on drums?

AFTER: It's interesting, because I've heard Nate a bunch of times and I am familiar with his playing, but he sounds different here—the toms especially. It doesn't sound like he usually does live.

And, of course, he plays you in *Birdman*. [Ed note: Smith appears briefly in the film, playing the score by Sanchez, who was unavailable due to touring.]

Yeah. I love Nate.

10. Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom

"Pork Belly" (from *No Morphine, No Lilies*, The Royal Potato Family). Miller, drums; Myra Melford, piano; Todd Sickafoose, bass. Recorded in 2013.

BEFORE: Is it fairly recent? Sometimes it sounds like an older guy, sometimes it sounds like a young guy.

AFTER: I'm not familiar with Allison's playing. The tune sounds good. Those singles—I'm not sure if it's doubles or singles—remind me a lot of Tony [Williams]. It's cool, very open.

11. Kendrick Scott Oracle

"Cycling Through Reality" (from *Conviction*, Concord Jazz). Scott, drums; John Ellis, tenor saxophone; Alan Hampton, Mike Moreno, guitars; Taylor Eigsti, piano; Joe Sanders, bass. Recorded in 2013.

BEFORE: It's funny, because sometimes it sounds like a straight-ahead guy and sometimes it sounds like a very fusion-y guy. Is that Eric [Harland]? Sometimes it sounds a little bit like Eric, a little bit like Greg Hutchinson.

AFTER: Kendrick and Eric have that Texas sound. Kendrick probably would have been one of my next guesses. They also have that fusion-y sound but rooted in the straight-ahead,

with a lot of the vocabulary intertwined with fusion and backbeat. It's a little bit in the touch, I think. The sound of the drums is definitely very aggressive.

12. Snarky Puppy & Metropole Orkest

“Flight” (from *Sylva*, Impulse!). Michael League, bassist, composer; Robert “Sput” Searight, drums; Nate Werth, percussion; plus the remainder of Snarky Puppy, and the Metropole Orkest conducted by Jules Buckley. Recorded in 2014.

BEFORE: It sounds really mean in the beginning, and that melody comes in and displaces it. It really threw me off. A few of the people I had in mind, all of a sudden it didn't seem like it could be them. I like the way it started, and then it started getting a little too slick.

AFTER: That's Snarky Puppy? This is fairly recent? Snarky Puppy also has that chameleon-like aspect. Some of their tunes sound completely different, so you wouldn't think it was the same band. But they're all great musicians. What I like about them, for example, with that sound of the melody in the beginning—they go there. I think they have two keyboardists who are always playing these retro but modern-sounding things. It's an interesting combination. All the drummers they use are always really good. Underneath it sounds very modern, and on the top it's like, wow, I did not expect that at all. But that's kind of their thing too.

13. Eric Harland Voyager

“Raghavan” (from *Vipassana*, GSI). Harland, drums; Walter Smith III, tenor saxophone; Nir Felder, Julian Lage, guitars; Taylor Eigsti, piano; Harish Raghavan, bass. Recorded in 2014.

BEFORE: It sounds again like a guy with a little bit of a straight-ahead sound but a fusion feel. That's Eric. I've heard this album recently. This album is interesting. It's sometimes very jazzy, very experimental, then very hip-hoppy on some tunes.

I like Eric and Kendrick's approach. They have that big drum sound, the cymbals are very jazzy, and sometimes the drums are really fusion-y and very aggressive but musical, which I always like in drummers. All those Texas guys also have tons of chops, but it's organic at the same time. And it's always nice to see in my generation [of drummers] that they're writing their own tunes and leading their own bands. There have always been great drummers that were bandleaders, but drummer-bandleaders who write, that's not so [common]. It's becoming more the norm than the exception, which is good. **JT**

Enrico Rava Quartet w/ Gianluca Petrella *Wild Dance*

Enrico Rava trumpet
Francesco Diodati guitar / **Gabriele Evangelista** double bass / **Enrico Morello** drums / **Gianluca Petrella** trombone

The five Italians play a program of Rava originals which cover a broad range of moods – from brooding ballad playing to fiery up-tempo post-bop.

Stefano Battaglia Trio *In The Morning*

Stefano Battaglia piano
Salvatore Maiore bass
Roberto Dani drums

On his sixth album for ECM the Italian pianist and his trio reflect on the work of American composer Alec Wilder (1907 – 1980).



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By Shaun Brady



SCOTT ROBINSON

IN SUBURBAN NEW JERSEY,
NEW SONIC FRONTIERS

Like any self-respecting mad scientist, Scott Robinson, 56, hides his secret lab away from prying eyes. The headquarters of ScienSonic Laboratories is cleverly disguised as a quaint, well-manicured suburban home in Teaneck, N.J. Look more closely at the heavy wooden doors of the converted two-car garage—guarded by Robinson's pet rabbit, Tribble, in an attached "rabbitat"—and you'll notice a small plaque reading "Lab A: Sonic Research."

Inside is a variety of strange devices and apparatuses that would make any Frankenstein or Moreau proud, albeit with more strings, bells and horns. The Jersey-born, Virginia-raised saxophonist has been toiling in this space since 2007 to create "Worlds of Tomorrow Through Sound."

The equipment in this laboratory consists of hundreds of unusual instruments collected by Robinson over decades spent scouring flea markets and junk shops. Walking into the cluttered confines of the lab, one can feel like the Incredible Shrinking Man, surrounded by the oversize contrabass saxophone, bass and contrabass banjos and enormous drums. A half-dozen Theremins, including a rare Robert Moog creation, are scattered around the room, while smaller percussion instruments literally hang from the rafters. Two vibraphones, a set of tuned bells, boobams and a bass tarogato are visible. A gleaming spacesuit hangs on one wall, while a recent acquisition, a 12-foot alphorn, sits disassembled in its case.

"This is my world," Robinson says, entering the room in a gray button-up shirt bedecked with colorful, cartoonish test tubes and beakers. "I've spent a lifetime putting together an incredible

arsenal of instruments, but it's not really about the instruments—it's about the sounds. But in order to reach all these different sounds you have to have the tools to do it."

The lab only scratches the surface of Robinson's extensive instrument collection. A narrow path in his basement cuts through stacks of instruments awaiting repair, while the staircase ends at the "Wall of the Ancients," a lineup of mostly unplayable artifacts that includes a backwards-facing Civil War-era alto horn ("Miles Davis should've had one of these," Robinson jokes) and a bass rothophone.

The collection began innocently enough, he claims. "I started on an instrument which lends itself to playing other instruments. The saxophone is a family of instruments, so if you can play one you can pretty much play another. So it's an instrument that has a tendency to launch you out into other areas of sound. Most saxophonists will stop at a certain point; I just never stopped."

Long known in trad-jazz circles for his playing with the likes of trumpeter Ruby Braff and pianists John Sheridan and Johnny Varro; his stints as a sideman with legends like Lionel Hampton, Illinois Jacquet and Frank Wess; and for his big-band bari virtuosity, most notably in the Maria Schneider Orchestra, Robinson created ScienSonic as the avant Mr. Hyde to his more mainstream Dr. Jekyll. "I would pick up magazines and read pieces that said that I'm mainly a big-band baritone player, or that I'm mainly a mainstreamer," Robinson says, absentmindedly fingering a trumpet while seated on his living-room couch. "I would read this and think, 'If you only knew.' I'm active in a lot of intersecting worlds, and some of them barely touch."

Since 2010, Robinson has released a steady stream of adventurous CDs through the ScienSonic imprint, including duo sessions with woodwinds player Roscoe Mitchell and pianists Frank Kimbrough and Emil Viklický, and a set of pieces for three bass saxophones featuring JD Parran and Vinny Golia. Through the subsidiary Doc-Tone Records he issued *Bronze Nemesis*, an homage to pulp hero Doc Savage recorded by his (what else?) Doctette. More recent ScienSonic discs include a duo date with bassist Julian Thayer (Robinson's roommate at Berklee), featuring a title that is simply a blue question mark, as well as *Mission in Space* by Robinson's Spacetette including Marshall Allen and Henry Grimes.

Recently returned from the West Texas Jazz Party at the time of our interview, Robinson continues to flex his trad muscles alongside these more cosmic sounds. But the 2012 death of Mat Domber, founder of the Arbors Records label, for which Robinson most often recorded in that vein, has left that side of his output less documented. "In trying to balance my life I put this big weight on one end of the seesaw," he says, "and then the other weight got yanked away so it's tilted in the other direction. But I love playing beautiful melodies, old tunes, ballads. I never want to be so far out that I can't play 'Stardust.'"

Perhaps the only instrument that Robinson doesn't play these days is the baritone sax. Fearing the typecasting that comes with recognition on the horn, he's set the bari aside for the time being, except for very special cases such as Schneider's band. He's focusing more on his

Recommended Listening:

Scott Robinson/Julian Thayer
? (ScienSonic, 2015)

Scott Robinson Spacetette
Mission in Space (ScienSonic, 2015)

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first love, tenor sax, playing semi-regularly with the Mingus Big Band and trumpeter Jon-Erik Kellso's EarRegulars.

All of ScienSonic's releases feature otherworldly cover art, by Richard M. Powers, that was originally created for 1950s and '60s science-fiction paperbacks. Powers was an imaginative artist who eschewed the usual spacemen and rocket ships in favor of surrealist landscapes. Today, many of his original paintings grace the walls of Robinson's home, and the saxophonist has signed an agreement with Powers' estate granting him exclusive use of the artist's work for music releases. "I was a big reader as a kid—I still am—and I love science fiction particularly," Robinson says. "So I would find these paperbacks that were old even then, and I fell in love with these covers and the way that they would draw me into this completely new reality. It really had an effect on me, and in later years I think that was one reason I was so receptive to music by people like Sun Ra. I think Powers had kind of prepared me to step into that dimension, and I wasn't afraid of it the way I think a lot of people are."

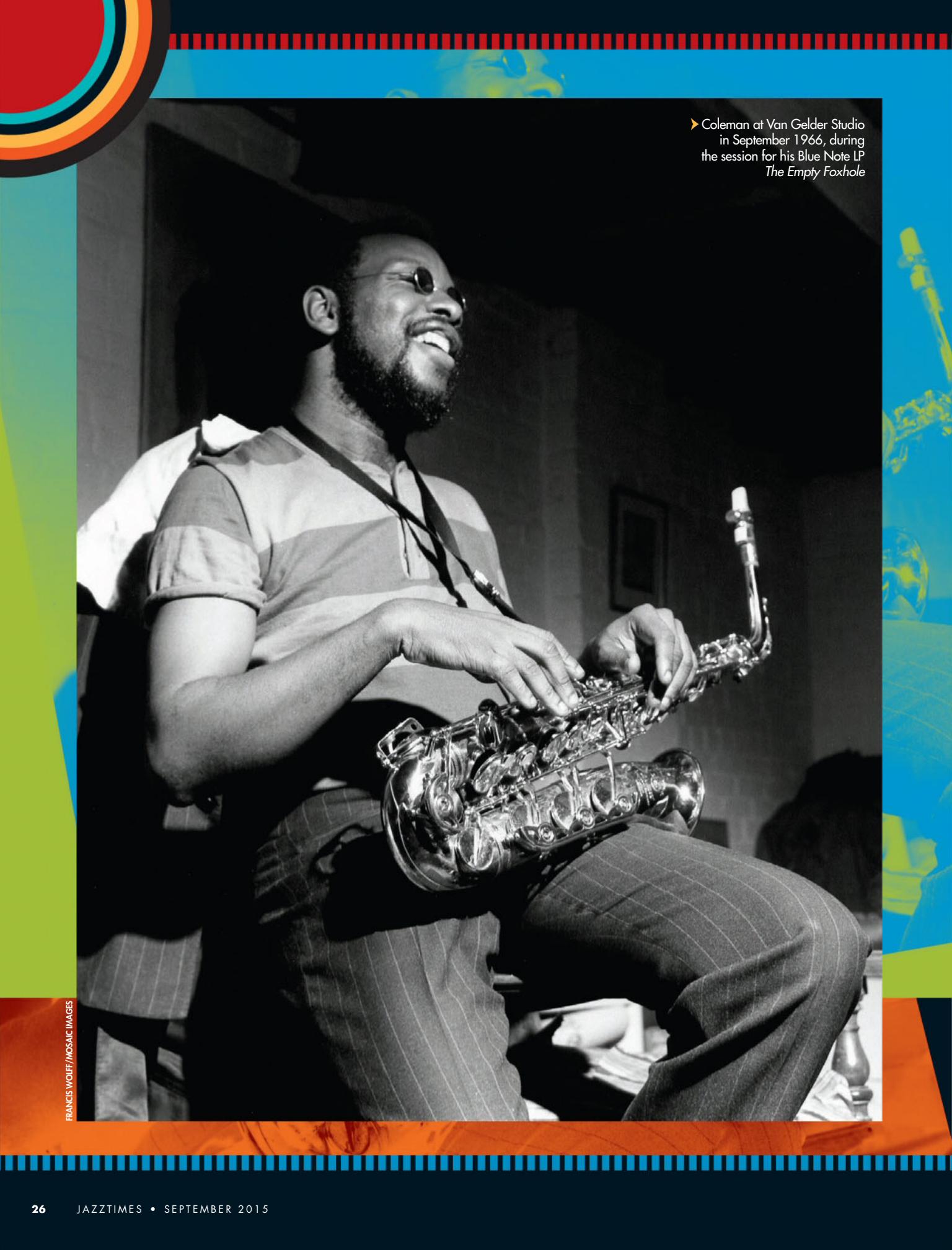
Sun Ra has been a strong influence both aesthetically and musically over the years for Robinson, making his collaborations with longtime Arkestra member (now director) Marshall Allen all the more special. Last April, Robinson, Allen and a number of fellow travelers entered Lab A to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the recording of *The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra, Volume One* with a session utilizing the original's distinctive sonic palette. (Robinson plans to release the recording on Nov. 16, the half-century anniversary of the recording of *Volume Two*.) The session was presided over by the engineer of the original sessions, Richard L. Alderson, and features the bass marimba played by Sun Ra on the album, an instrument that now resides in the lab.

A second Doctette release is also due out this fall, music from which Robinson expects to premiere at this summer's Newport Jazz Festival. In addition, he has a backlog of recordings crafted in the lab with all of his collaborators, including a first-time meeting between Mitchell, Allen and Milford Graves.

ScienSonic's output is couched in the retro-futuristic language and imagery of mid-20th-century sci-fi, a unique space-age blend of optimism, invention and naïveté. "I feel that the futuristic aesthetic of the '50s and '60s was more forward-looking than the futuristic aesthetic of today," Robinson explains. "We're so obsessed with technology and gadgets now, but back then it was more about how the technology was going to evolve and shape this better world for all of us. It's like we've all given up on that now. It's more selfish, more of a me thing [*mimes tapping on a smartphone*]. Technological advancements were supposed to produce this utopian tomorrow."

Doing his part to invent that tomorrow, Robinson has created a membership model for ScienSonic, allowing listeners to become part of a community through different contribution levels. Inspired by Schneider's success with crowdfunding through ArtistShare, Robinson offers his fans a number of appropriate rewards—from CDs and access to exclusive music and videos, to a personalized ScienSonic lab coat or the opportunity to contribute a sound to a future recording.

"Musicians who do very far-reaching, adventurous, creative music, at least in jazz, are always being accused of disregarding the audience and being inaccessible," says Robinson. "I get really sick of hearing this stuff, so I've been waging a personal battle to prove all of that wrong. The music that we do for ScienSonic is unabashedly, unapologetically forward-thinking. It's not for everyone—but it's for anyone. I'm working very hard to make ScienSonic Laboratories a fun and inviting place." **JT**



► Coleman at Van Gelder Studio
in September 1966, during
the session for his Blue Note LP
The Empty Foxhole

FRANCIS WOOLF/MOSAIC IMAGES

FREE:FOR ALL

REFLECTIONS ON ORNETTE COLEMAN, EMPATHETIC GENIUS OF THE JAZZ AVANT-GARDE



Ornette Coleman, who died on June 11 at 85, received due credit in his time: as an alto saxophonist of singular impact, a composer-bandleader of restless purpose and an all-around trailblazer, the man who did more than anyone to blow open

modern jazz's orthodoxies of style. A recipient of the first Guggenheim Fellowship for jazz composition in 1967, he later became a MacArthur Fellow, an NEA Jazz Master and the winner of both a Pulitzer Prize and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. Still, there remained to the end an air of the maverick about Coleman. "He was seen as a native avant-gardist," wrote Ben Ratliff in a front-page obituary for the *New York Times*, "personifying the American independent will as much as any artist of the last century."

To my mind, Coleman was quite possibly jazz's greatest humanist. In his music as in even the most casual conversation, he was always drawing parallels between sonic principles and the human condition. And unlike some other important exponents of free jazz, he wasn't inexorably drawn to mysticism or religion, choosing to frame his innovations as the product of personal inquisition. However slippery and circuitous his logic—as an improviser and certainly as the auteur of harmolodics, his idiosyncratic music theory—it nevertheless was some kind of logic, striving toward a rational ideal.

Coleman once said to the critic Martin Williams, one of his early champions, that "rhythmic patterns should be as natural as breathing patterns." In analogous fashion, the imploring cry in his alto saxophone sound was often said to evoke the inflections of human speech, a standard against which most organized Western music could, by comparison, seem hopelessly constrained. "Every note that has a title has so many frequencies to represent that note," he told me in 2006. "But that's not

true of your voice. We're speaking, right? But we don't have to tune up to talk."

We were sitting on a couch in Coleman's capacious loft, in the garment district of Manhattan. He was about to release *Sound Grammar*, on a new label of the same name, and I was gathering intel for a cover story in *JazzTimes*. (The album, his last sanctioned release, was the one that earned him the Pulitzer.) Grasping for a clearer understanding of harmolodic theory, I lobbed a handful of questions building on his own grammatical analogy: was he implying, then, that sound adheres to its own rules of usage? He humored this line of inquiry for a while, regaling me with examples of the pesky intervallic issues that harmolodics was meant to address. He was especially hung up on the idea of transposition between different keys, seeming to regard it as a metaphor for the stubborn obstacles that lay in the path of social harmony.

Given that Coleman named one of his albums *Of Human Feelings*—incidentally, his best with the harmolodic funk band Prime Time, released on Antilles in 1982 and still maddeningly out of print—I should have known he would speak even more pointedly about the primacy of emotion. "The only thing that can change sound is emotion," he said firmly. "Other stuff just gets in the way and makes it sound like noise. But emotion actually changes sound. Which means that emotion is 10 times more pure than sound."

That's an unscientific claim, but Coleman's body of work partly illustrates the point. "Lonely Woman," his best-known composition, remains a miracle of mournful empathy. "Focus on Sanity," with that "heh-heh-heh" riff in the melody, captures the feeling of delirium. Coleman's output of the late 1950s and early

BY NATE CHINEN



► Coleman in 1966 and (below) in 2014

'60s is often appraised for what it *didn't* do: follow the harmonic contours of a song à la bebop precursors like Charlie Parker. One reason it all still sounds so vital, more than half a century later, is that Coleman wasn't upending formal principles as some sort of intellectual exercise. He was simply pursuing his own unbound intuition. The emotional aspect of his music probably had some bearing on the intensity of reactions in the jazz

COLEMAN WAS QUITE POSSIBLY JAZZ'S GREATEST HUMANIST. IN HIS MUSIC AS IN EVEN THE MOST CASUAL CONVERSATION, HE WAS ALWAYS DRAWING PARALLELS BETWEEN SONIC PRINCIPLES AND THE HUMAN CONDITION.

establishment, with some denouncing him as a charlatan and others hailing him as a genius. His playing prompted Miles Davis, rather famously, to declare that he was "all screwed up inside."

There's a fascinating moment in *Ornette: Made in America*, Shirley Clarke's 30-year-old documentary, recently reissued on Blu-ray and DVD. Coleman is sitting on the rundown porch of his childhood house in Fort Worth, Texas, counseling his son, Denardo, about the importance of an artist holding fast to his original idea. Just then, a freight train rumbles past, on the edge of the frame. Coleman doesn't seem to notice its presence, or the clangor of the crossing bell, until Denardo mentions the disruption. "Oh, yeah," Coleman says then, with a

faraway grin. "That train used to wake me up every morning. Yeah, I was living really close to the track there."

Whether or not that locomotive racket was in some way formative, it's instructive to think of Coleman as practically hardwired for the revelatory thrust of his art. There was an unforced, almost guileless quality to his music, which is why it's not really accurate to call him an iconoclast, despite the insurgent titles of his early albums, like *This Is Our Music, Tomorrow Is the Question!* and, of course, *The Shape of Jazz to Come*.

More than any major jazz musician I can name, Coleman's music proposed a dialectic. His own playing achieved clearest definition in relation to the playing of his bandmates (as opposed to the material).

"DO EVERYTHING YOU WANNA DO"

FOUR OF ORNETTE COLEMAN'S COLLEAGUES AND ADMIRERS REMEMBER HIS WISDOM

► PAUL BLEY, pianist

The word "genius" comes to mind with reference to Ornette Coleman—no question about it. He taught me how to play. Before Ornette, you could make a living playing in someone else's style—I was playing Bud Powell and so forth. Ornette drew a line in the sand.

Our time at the Hillcrest Club [in 1958] was so monumental. The club would be full, packed even, for our band, but when Ornette started playing, the street in front of the club would suddenly fill up with people waiting for him to stop playing because they didn't know what had hit them!

When someone can influence the whole world of music, "genius" may actually be too small a word! He changed the course of all of musical improvising: There's before him and after him.

► JOE LOVANO, saxophonist

I was hipped as a teenager to Ornette. Just his album titles gave you big hints as to what was happening on them: *The Art of the Improvisers*, *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, *New York Is Now!* We had a friendship, and he was always inviting me to play or sit in, and I was always hesitant. But in 2008 I finally played with him in a performance for German TV. After the first couple tunes I was gonna leave, but Ornette had me stay the whole set, and even do "Lonely Woman" in the encore. He was so beautiful and so generous: He really wanted your contribution to mean something, no matter who you were.

So I had some really special moments with him. He just glowed, man. He glowed with life and energy and wisdom. And I remember the last thing he ever

said to me. It was at his 85th birthday celebration, just this past March. He had a kind of guru vibe in those last days, and he just said, "Do everything you wanna do." He repeated that a bunch of times. "Do everything you wanna do." I'll never forget that.

► CHARNETT MOFFETT, bassist

Ornette's dedication to the music was endless. I first played with him when I was about 5 years old, and I was playing the trumpet. (My first name combines my father, Charles, and Ornette.) He had me sit in with him. It was an amazing experience because at every moment he

played exactly what he wanted to share. And he was teaching me, by having me sit in, how to do that myself before I even knew what notes I was playing.

I certainly gained a world of knowledge from him. His harmolodic concept proved that each instrument was equal to all others and to the musical ideas that they are expressing. And when we think in an equal way about humans and about sounds, we are able to think and express in terms that uplift mankind. Ornette's music was about bringing people together and showing all the possibilities that exist before they settle into a fixed position.

He also taught me that creativity is eternal. As long as there is



The classic Ornette Coleman Quartet—with Don Cherry on pocket trumpet, Charlie Haden on bass and either Billy Higgins or Ed Blackwell on drums—put this notion to the test almost incessantly, negotiating a musical reality profoundly contingent on each player's choices from one moment to the next.

This was just as true for Prime Time, and for the other ensembles, lasting or ephemeral, that followed in its wake. *Sound Grammar* features the quartet that Coleman regularly led in the early 2000s, with Denardo on drums alongside two bassists, Greg Cohen and Tony Falanga. "The reason he has two bass players," Falanga explained, "is because a bass note changes the character and the function of whatever note is being played against it. Ornette could play a B and if I play a G, it sounds like he's playing the third; or I could play a C, and it sounds like he's playing the seventh. So he goes, 'Now I have two of you guys changing the meaning of my notes as I play them.' It's the opposite of most

people, who rely on the bass to give them the root of the chord."

That eagerness to subvert stability, welcoming a multiplicity of interpretations, may have been the most radical facet of Coleman's art. It sheds light on his openness as a collaborator, which yielded well-documented work with Jerry Garcia, Lou Reed and the Master Musicians of Jajouka—and more informal encounters with countless other musicians, the acolytes and the seekers. (An album released last year, the subject of a lawsuit by Coleman's estate, was the byproduct of jam sessions at the loft.)

As for that reverence for Coleman among rock musicians and others outside the jazz sphere, it speaks more to the humanist qualities in his music than to his role in changing the face of postbop improvisation. (Some years ago James Murphy, the producer, DJ and former frontman of LCD Soundsystem, proudly showed me a tattoo on his forearm: "This Is Our Music," in the typeface of the Atlantic album.)

Coleman gave his last performance on June 12, 2014, at Prospect Park in Brooklyn, the guest of honor at his own tribute. Among the other artists taking part were the tap dancer Savion Glover; a couple of the Master Musicians of Jajouka; the experimental musician and performance artist Laurie Anderson; Flea, of the Red Hot Chili Peppers; and the punk poet Patti Smith. I had the good fortune of seeing Coleman in concert almost a dozen times, but I regretfully missed this one, owing to a scheduled trip out of town. There has been talk of releasing a box set of the concert, which would be more than welcome, a fitting postscript to Coleman's hospitable eminence and a testament to his far-flung influence.

If such a release does materialize, I can only hope that it includes the comments that Coleman made near the top of the concert, as a sort of invocation. "There's nothing else but life," he reportedly said. "We can't be against each other. We have to help each other. It'll turn out like you will never forget it." **JT**

"ORNETTE WAS THE BLUES. THE LAST TIME I PLAYED WITH HIM, LAST YEAR IN PROSPECT PARK, EVERYTHING ELSE WAS STRIPPED AWAY, BUT THAT BLUES WASN'T."

life, there is something more to learn. And so we are fortunate to have been around one of the greatest artists of all time, who knew exactly what he wanted to express and was able to work it out intellectually and share it with us all.

► **DAVID MURRAY,**
saxophonist/bass clarinetist
I first met him when I went to New York City in my sophomore year at Pomona College [in Claremont, Calif.]. I had designed an independent study for one semester, a study of the saxophone since Ornette Coleman. He was very gracious, and his answers were always very clever; when you talk to him, the truth is right there, but he goes in circles around it—and ultimately gets to an even deeper truth.

He also warned me, "You have to be careful on that tenor, because you're gonna attract some strange women on it." That was part of Ornette's conception: He understood that different instruments had different ways of speaking, attracted different sorts of people. That's why he played tenor and trumpet and violin as well as alto, and he developed different sensibilities on each.

Ornette was the blues. The last time I played with him, last year in Prospect Park, everything else was stripped away, but that blues wasn't. He sounded like a 9-year-old kid again, who just got a sax and was trying to play the blues. He'd gone back to the source: Although he was free, that's what he went back to.

[Interviews by Michael J. West]



45 for 45



In honor of *JazzTimes'* 45th anniversary, we polled nearly 60 top musicians and *JT* writers to come up with a list of the 45 Greatest Small Groups in Jazz History. Participants were asked to provide a ballot ranking between five and 10 bands, trios through nonets, that they believe uphold the principles of the best improvising units—concepts like communication, empathy and a unique confluence of individual personalities. Dates have been added to denote specific lineups of ensembles that shifted personnel throughout their existence, and the first 20 entries feature commentary from artists and critics. Feel free to applaud or berate, but know that the verdict is still out: Starting Aug. 4, we'll be conducting a companion readers' poll at JazzTimes.com.

EVAN HAGA, Editor



► John Coltrane (left) and Miles Davis, the frontline of Davis' First Great Quintet, in 1959, a year after that iconic lineup had disbanded

1. JOHN COLTRANE: THE CLASSIC QUARTET

(Coltrane, saxophone/McCoy Tyner, piano/Jimmy Garrison, bass/Elvin Jones, drums) Honesty, conviction, no showbiz clutter—music that went directly to the soul, the mind and body of a listener, played nightly as if the musicians' lives depended on it. On top of these attributes, what these four gentlemen played changed the course of music forever: McCoy with those fourth-based voicings; Elvin with broad triplets played throughout the drum set; Jimmy with a sound and beat that was the foundation; and John—forget it, he did it all. If you were lucky enough to see the Classic Quartet live, it changed your life forever. **DAVE LIEBMAN**

2. MILES DAVIS: THE SECOND GREAT QUINTET

(Davis, trumpet/Wayne Shorter, saxophone/Herbie Hancock, piano/Ron Carter, bass/Tony Williams, drums)

This quintet played like the five fingers of one hand, all capable of moving independently while serving one common cause. I've never heard a better example of five amazingly strong solo voices playing together as a band with such sympathetic intensity. **KEN PEPLOWSKI**

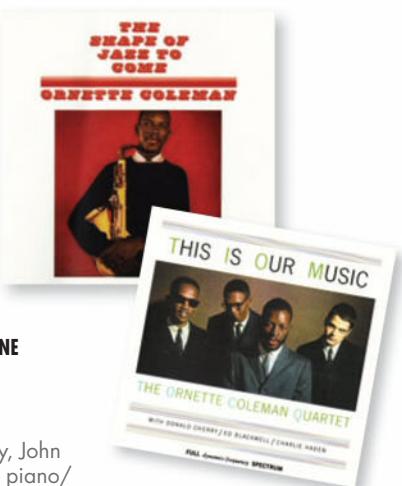
3. THE ORNETTE COLEMAN QUARTET

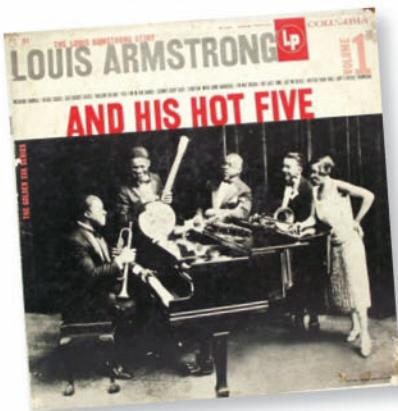
(Coleman, saxophone/Don Cherry, trumpet/Charlie Haden, bass/Ed Blackwell or Billy Higgins, drums)

Coleman's quartet established a new system of small-group interaction and improvisation—one that prioritized the cohesion of the group statement over the succession of individual statements within a group concept. The willingness of all four men to communicate using a melodic vocabulary unfamiliar to most at the time, and to withstand the waves of criticism thrust upon them by musicians, critics and fans alike, makes their contribution to the music heroic. **JIMMY GREENE**

4. MILES DAVIS: THE FIRST GREAT QUINTET/SEXET

(Davis, trumpet/Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, saxophones/Red Garland, piano/Paul Chambers, bass/Philly Joe Jones, drums) Miles' First Great Quintet set the standard for how a band should play together. The rhythm section laid down a swinging groove and provided the perfect accompaniment for each soloist, and everyone in the group listened to each other intensely. Though we're always pushing forward, this group will forever be the this-is-how-it's-done example. **JOEY DEFARANCESCO**





5. LOUIS ARMSTRONG & HIS HOT FIVE/SEVEN

(Armstrong, cornet/Kid Ory or John Thomas, trombone/Pete Briggs, tuba/Johnny Dodds, clarinet/Johnny St. Cyr, banjo/Lil Hardin Armstrong, piano/Baby Dodds, drums)

My aunt Theodosia Ingram was a singer, and her producer was Clarence Williams. He worked with the Hot Five as well, and often brought Louis Armstrong to our home. Armstrong's scatting on "Heebie Jeebies," and the use of stop-time technique within the arrangements, changed what came after him. If there is one band in the vast history of jazz that you should study, Louis Armstrong & His Hot Five is it. **ALLAN HARRIS**

6. BILL EVANS TRIO (1959-61)

(Evans, piano/Scott LaFaro, bass/ Paul Motian, drums)

I was struck by how different Evans' left hand was. Not only did he move it up an octave from where the pure beboppers played—freeing up the lower sound stage for the bassist—it contained true voice leading, and he used the left hand in a unique way



to shape the right-hand lines. I fell in love with his early, Village Vanguard sound and his emotional connection to his band—and to each tune he played. **FRED HERSCH**

7. ART BLAKEY & THE JAZZ MESSENGERS (1961-64)

(Blakey, drums/Freddie Hubbard, trumpet/Curtis Fuller, trombone/Wayne Shorter, saxophone/Cedar Walton, piano/Jymie Merritt or Reggie Workman, bass)

Blakey was a force throughout his entire career, but both the writing and soloing of this lineup were particularly inspired. Wayne, Freddie and Cedar all composed several masterpieces for the band, and Freddie in particular was an unstoppable, fiery melodic improviser on album after album. The harmonic sophistication of both Wayne and Cedar augmented Blakey's indomitable drive, and Workman's arrival pushed everyone further still. But ultimately it was the incredible tunes that made this band. **AARON GOLDBERG**

8. WEATHER REPORT (1976-81)

(Joe Zawinul, keyboards/Wayne Shorter, saxophone/Jaco Pastorius, bass/Alex Acuña or Peter Erskine, drums/Manolo Badrena or Robert Thomas Jr., percussion)

Weather Report merged jazz and rock in very distinctive ways. Their approach to using electronics and grooves within consistently innovative jazz-inspired compositions set the bar so high that 40 years later their music still sounds as fresh as tomorrow. **REZ ABBASI**

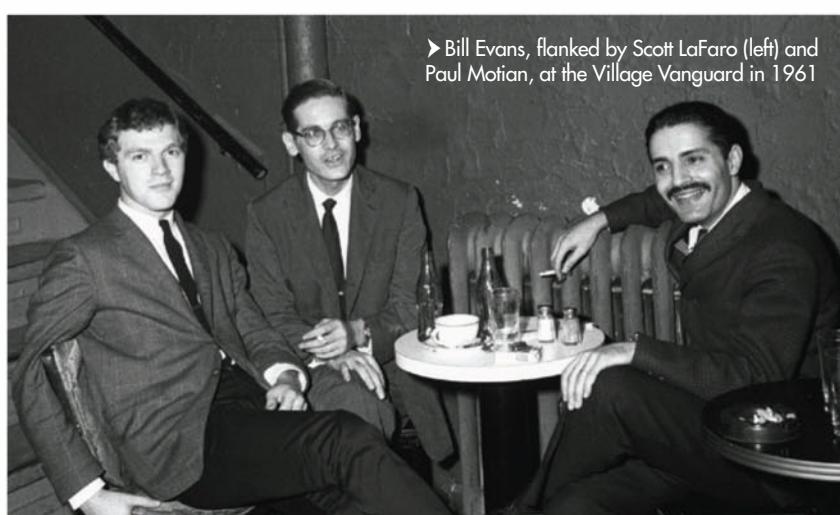
9. CHARLIE PARKER/ DIZZY GILLESPIE: THE QUINTET

(Parker, saxophone/Gillespie, trumpet/Bud Powell, piano/Charles Mingus, bass/Max Roach, drums)

This was perhaps the premier bebop ensemble. The elaborate heads, catchy intros and outros, and more elaborate and ambitious soloing were the trademark components. While the music came out of a blues and swing sensibility, there were many adventurous devices used to get to the more colorful aspects of the harmonic structures. Between the doubling up of the time and the breakneck tempos,



► Bill Evans, flanked by Scott LaFaro (left) and Paul Motian, at the Village Vanguard in 1961



► Charlie Parker with Miles Davis and Max Roach (obscured) in 1947



► Art Ensemble of Chicago in 1978

eighth- and sixteenth-note lines would fly by. Today, the recordings sound as fresh and contemporary as ever. **BOB MINTZER**

10. CHARLIE PARKER QUINTET (1947)

(Parker, saxophone/Miles Davis, trumpet/Duke Jordan or Bud Powell, piano/Tommy Potter, bass/Max Roach, drums)

Parker, two years into his solo career and already the gold standard of instrumental virtuosity, hired a rhythm section custom-built to handle his unprecedented chops. Miles Davis, on the other hand, offset them. His lyrical economy suggested that modern jazz had still more possibilities. **MICHAEL J. WEST**

11. ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO

(Lester Bowie, trumpet/Malachi Favors, bass/Joseph Jarman, woodwinds/Roscoe Mitchell, woodwinds/Famoudou Don Moye, percussion) The Art Ensemble of Chicago was a pillar of musical fluidity, in that they were stylistically and timbrally completely malleable. They could change course, in any direction, at the drop of a hat. The Art Ensemble also brought the role of identity—racial and lineal heritage—to the music in a new way. That is a

powerful message for all who have followed. **DAVE DOUGLAS**

12. KEITH JARRETT "STANDARDS" TRIO

(Jarrett, piano/Gary Peacock, bass/Jack DeJohnette, drums) They breathe together, and are of one mind with how pulse can ebb and flow. They are pastoral and textural, with a rich, orchestral sound that's immensely melodic. All three musicians have a unique and phenomenal touch on their instrument, which plays a big role in defining their sound. The trio embodies freedom to me, even within the boundaries of standards, which they make sound modern—timeless, actually—with no beginning and no end.

TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON



► Jack DeJohnette, Keith Jarrett and Gary Peacock (from left) in 2010

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► The Modern Jazz Quartet—John Lewis, Connie Kay, Milt Jackson and Percy Heath (from left)—in 1988

13. MODERN JAZZ QUARTET

(John Lewis, piano/Milt Jackson, vibraphone/Percy Heath, bass/Connie Kay, drums)

Lewis, Jackson, Heath and Kay spent 40 years refining the concept they invented: chamber jazz. Until 1994, they played intricate, erudite, impeccable music, taut with the contrast between Lewis' minimalism and Jackson's lushness. Remembering them now, dignified in their business suits, swinging their butts off, it all seems so long ago and far away.

THOMAS CONRAD

14. CLIFFORD BROWN/ MAX ROACH QUINTET

(Brown, trumpet/Roach, drums/Harold Land or Sonny Rollins, saxophone/Richie Powell, piano/George Morrow, bass)

The Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet was a blast furnace of modern jazz expression whose second incarnation conjoined three jazz immortals: Brown, who indelibly touched subsequent trumpet generations despite his tragically truncated life; the polyrhythmic pioneer-seeker Roach; and Sonny Rollins, inhabitant of the Mount Rushmore of tenor saxophonists.

WILLARD JENKINS

15. MILES DAVIS QUINTET (1969-70)

(Davis, trumpet/Wayne Shorter, saxophone/Chick Corea, Rhodes, piano/Dave Holland, bass/Jack DeJohnette, drums)

The rhythm section of the “lost” quintet had huge shoes to fill when they joined Miles Davis in 1969. They were replacing probably the best rhythm section this music had ever seen, and were playing basically the same material that the previous group owned. They soon found their own voice, though, and it was a hard-driving, more groove-based sound that spurred Miles on to the strongest, most intense playing of his career. DAVID WEISS

16. AHMAD JAMAL TRIO (1957-62)

(Jamal, piano/Israel Crosby, bass/Vernel Fournier, drums)

This trio put two very important qualities in the foreground, both of which defy notation: groove and process. Each “song” became an opportunity for these deep human interactions: astute and sympathetic listening, deft rhythmic communication, rich spontaneity. People always talk about Jamal’s use of space—but it isn’t just space, because the other musicians are playing. So it’s really about embracing the others, and letting them take over for those moments. This is what listening sounds like. VIJAY IYER

Herbie Hancock's early '70s sextet, which is now affectionately known as the "Mwandishi" sextet, was by far an "all-in" band. They were acoustic, electric, swinging, funky and avant-garde—all through a lens of spiritualism and pan-Africanism.

—CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE

17. BENNY GOODMAN QUARTET

(Goodman, clarinet/Lionel Hampton, vibraphone/Teddy Wilson, piano/Gene Krupa, drums)

When Goodman added the ebullient vibraphonist Lionel Hampton to his chamber-jazz trio, he concocted the ultimate yin-and-yang small jazz band: hot and cool, earthy and refined, cerebral and swinging. And black and white: Goodman integrated the showbiz major leagues a decade before Jackie Robinson would do the same for baseball. **DAVID KASTIN**

18. THE DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET

(Brubeck, piano/Paul Desmond, saxophone/Eugene Wright, bass/Joe Morello, drums)

Even when employing odd time signatures derived from global influences, the classic Brubeck Quartet made accessible music that sold in the millions. They were a single-minded organism with four distinct personalities: Desmond's melancholic "dry martini" alto tone perfectly complemented Brubeck's stout chording and classically informed erudition, and the rhythm section kept it all swinging, whether in 4/4, 5/4 or 9/8. **JEFF TAMARKIN**



► The Mahavishnu Orchestra in the early '70s

19. THE MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA (1971-73)

(John McLaughlin, guitar/Jerry Goodman, violin/Jan Hammer, keyboards/Rick Laird, bass/Billy Cobham, drums)

This is music I will never be able to conceive to play, but it is still so, so inspiring. The axis of John McLaughlin and Billy Cobham was just mindboggling. The perfect band.

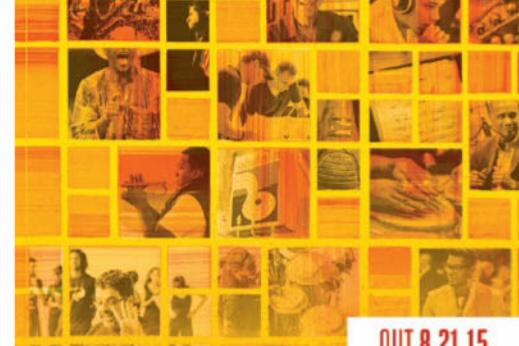
FRANK VIGNOLA

20. THE CANNONBALL ADDERLEY QUINTET (1966-69)

(Cannonball Adderley, saxophone/Nat Adderley, cornet/Joe Zawinul, piano/Victor Gaskin, bass/Roy McCurdy, drums)

This band developed a very distinct sound that swung very hard, was extremely soulful, and at times drew influences from the rhythm-and-blues and soul music of the day. Listening to these recordings helped me understand and further appreciate the directions that Cannonball and Zawinul went in later during their careers.

JALEEL SHAW



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21. THE TONY WILLIAMS LIFETIME (1969)

(Williams, drums/John McLaughlin, guitar/Larry Young, organ)

22. OSCAR PETERSON TRIO (1953-65)

(Peterson, piano/Ray Brown, bass/Herb Ellis, guitar, or Ed Thigpen, drums)

23. CHARLES LLOYD QUARTET (1966)

(Lloyd, tenor saxophone, flute/Keith Jarrett, piano/Cecil McBee, bass/Jack DeJohnette, drums)

24. HERBIE HANCOCK "MWANDISHI" SEXTET

(Hancock, Rhodes/Eddie Henderson, trumpet/Julian Priester, trombone/

Bennie Maupin, woodwinds/Buster Williams, bass/Billy Hart, drums)

25. THELONIOUS MONK QUARTET (1957-58)

(Monk, piano/John Coltrane, saxophone/Ahmed Abdul-Malik, bass/Roy Haynes or Shadow Wilson, drums)

The image shows the cover of Cecile McLorin Salvant's album 'FOR ONE TO LOVE'. The cover is split into two main sections. The left side is a red graphic featuring a stylized black silhouette of a woman's face and a small figure of a man. The right side is a black and white portrait of Cecile McLorin Salvant wearing a red feathered hat and white-rimmed glasses, resting her chin on her hand. The title 'FOR ONE TO LOVE' is written vertically on the right side. Below the title, the artist's name 'Cécile McLorin Salvant' is written in a script font, followed by 'VOCALS'. The credits list 'Aaron Diehl - PIANO', 'Paul Sikivie - DOUBLE BASS', and 'Lawrence Leathers - DRUMS'. The word 'new' is printed in a small font above the text 'CD and digital download also as double vinyl LP with bonus songs'. Below this, it says 'watch for the videos' and lists 'Look at Me' and 'Wives and Lovers' (with Storyboard P). The Mack Avenue logo is in the bottom left corner, and the website 'mackavenue.com' and 'cecilemclorinsalvant.com' are in the bottom right corner. A small note at the bottom right says 'Get it at iTunes.com/CecileMcLorinSalvant'.



**26. WAYNE SHORTER QUARTET
(2001-PRESENT)**

(Shorter, saxophone/Danilo Pérez, piano/John Patitucci, bass/Brian Blade, drums)

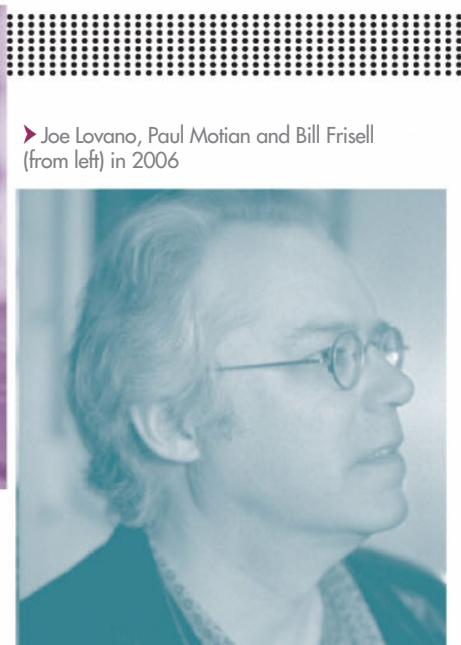


27. CHARLES MINGUS SEXTET (1964)

(Mingus, bass/Johnny Coles, trumpet/Eric Dolphy, woodwinds/Clifford Jordan, saxophone/Jaki Byard, piano/Dannie Richmond, drums)

**28. THERONIOUS MONK QUARTET
(1964-69)**

(Monk, piano/Charlie Rouse, saxophone/Larry Gales, bass/Ben Riley, drums)



**29. PAUL MOTIAN/BILL FRISELL/
JOE LOVANO**

(Motian, drums/Frisell, guitar/Lovano, saxophone)



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► The classic mid-'70s lineup of Return to Forever, reunited in 2008: Al Di Meola, Stanley Clarke, Chick Corea and Lenny White (from left)

30. RETURN TO FOREVER (1974-76, 2008)

(Chick Corea, keyboards/Al Di Meola, guitar/Stanley Clarke, bass/Lenny White, drums)

31. THE JAZZET (1960)

(Art Farmer, trumpet/Benny Golson, saxophone/Curtis Fuller, trombone/McCoy Tyner, piano/Addison Farmer, bass/Lex Humphries, drums)

32. CHICK COREA/MIROSLAV VITOUS/ROY HAYNES

(Corea, piano/Vitous, bass/Haynes, drums)

33. NAT KING COLE TRIO (1937-41)

(Cole, piano, vocals, arranger/Oscar Moore, guitar/Wesley Prince, bass)

34. GERRY MULLIGAN/CHET BAKER QUARTET (1952-53)

(Mulligan, saxophone/Baker, trumpet/Bob Whitlock, bass/Chico Hamilton, drums)

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35. AIR
(Henry Threadgill, woodwinds/Fred Hopkins, bass/Steve McCall, drums)

36. BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET (1987-97)
(Marsalis, saxophone/Kenny Kirkland, piano/Robert Hurst, bass/Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums)

37. DUKE ELLINGTON/CHARLES MINGUS/MAX ROACH
(Ellington, piano/Mingus, bass/Roach, drums)

38. JASON MORAN & THE BANDWAGON
(Moran, piano/Tarus Mateen, bass/Nash Wooten, drums)

39. WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET (1977-89)
(Hamiet Bluiett, baritone saxophone, alto clarinet/Julius Hemphill, alto and soprano saxophone, flute/Oliver Lake, alto and soprano saxophone/David Murray, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet)

40. DON PULLEN/GEORGE ADAMS QUARTET
(Don Pullen, piano/George Adams, saxophone/Cameron Brown, bass/Dannie Richmond, drums)

41. KEITH JARRETT "AMERICAN" QUARTET
(Jarrett, piano/Dewey Redman, saxophone/Charlie Haden, bass/Paul Motian, drums)

42. RETURN TO FOREVER (1972-73)
(Chick Corea, keyboards/Joe Farrell, woodwinds/Stanley Clarke, bass/Lenny White, drums/Airto Moreira, percussion/Flora Purim, vocals)

43. CECIL TAYLOR UNIT (1962)
(Taylor, piano/Jimmy Lyons, saxophone/Sunny Murray, drums)

44. WYNTON MARSALIS QUINTET (1984-85)
(Marsalis, trumpet/Branford Marsalis, saxophone/Kenny Kirkland, piano/Charnett Moffett, bass/Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums)

45. JIMMY GIUFFRE 3 (1957-58)
(Giuffre, clarinet, saxophone/Jim Hall, guitar/Ralph Pena, bass; later, trombonist Bob Brookmeyer replaces Pena) **JT**



What bands did we miss? Vote for your favorites in a companion readers' poll at JazzTimes.com!



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In contemporary Rio, “Brazilian jazz” shares the art-strong, support-starved plight of improvised music the world over

BEYOND



This past April in Rio de Janeiro, I told composer Carlos Lyra, a founder of the bossa nova, that I was writing a piece about Rio's jazz scene, past and present. "Oh, so it's fiction!" he quipped. I knew what he meant: that jazz as Americans play it barely exists in Brazil.

Pianist João Donato, another bossa pioneer, agrees. "You cannot expect to have a jazz group here that sounds like Ray Brown and Oscar Peterson. It's like pronunciation. A guy who lives in New York speaks English and the one who lives in Japan speaks English, but it doesn't sound the same."

That hasn't kept Brazilian musicians from trying to absorb the jazz vocabulary. Bossa, which emerged in 1958, was streamlined samba, but it owed a lot to West Coast cool. Then came "sambajazz," which strove for a harder East Coast sound. Pulling off the blend was a "big challenge," explains Cliff Korman, a New York jazz pianist and educator who has lived in Rio for years. "How do you take a language that was developed out of a certain rhythm and pulse and apply it to another rhythmic family, and does that work?"

For Lyra, it was a collision. He responded by writing "Influência do Jazz" ("The Influence of Jazz"), a bossa classic. Its lyrics, in English, read: "My poor samba/It mixed and modernized and lost itself/And the sway of the samba, where is it? ... The samba swings from side to side/Jazz is different, it swings from front to back."

In whatever direction, the song swings so hard, and with such throbbing jazz syncopation, that it refutes its own message. A 1963 live recording by Brazil's budding queen of sambajazz, Leny Andrade, gives further proof of why this transcultural hybrid could not be stopped. Even then, at 20, Andrade improvised more nimbly than most of her American peers. When she lets loose with a fiery scat solo, the crowd at Copacabana's Manhattan Club bursts into cheers. Her musicians—Tenório Jr., a hotshot sambajazz pianist; bassist Zézinho; and Milton Banana, a trailblazing bossa drummer—sail effortlessly from samba to straight-ahead jazz to Afro-Cuban. A year later, in 1964, Tenório Jr. would record a milestone album of sambajazz, *Embalo*.

BOSSA

BY JAMES GAVIN

Today in Rio, the style known so fondly to foreigners as “Brazilian jazz” is a niche market indeed. It faces the same problems, only worse, that plague jazz almost everywhere—marginal airplay and mainstream media coverage, a diminishing number of venues, a narrowing public. Mike Ryan, the Australian owner of TribOz, a jazz club in downtown Rio, minces no words about the size of the local jazz audience. “In terms of the people who actually support the music by going to places, the venues are all competing for about … a hundred people? Lucky if there’s a hundred.”

Somehow, Brazilian jazz survives as a genre all its own. “You can’t say French jazz or Belgian jazz or Argentine jazz or Finnish jazz,” notes Zé Nogueira, the Rio-based soprano saxophonist and producer. “They don’t exist. When jazz musicians arrive in Brazil, they’re so impressed. Musicians are playing here in a very different way than they play elsewhere.”

Brazilian jazz remains rooted in samba, but it references other native styles, notably *choro*, the breathlessly rhythmic party music that sprang out of 19th-century Rio. The repertoire is almost exclusively the Great Brazilian Songbook, a world as vast and rich as its American counterpart. But how much jazz does Brazilian jazz really have? “If you think of jazz as a language of improvisation, this term ‘Brazilian jazz’ makes sense,” says Mauro Senise, a flutist and saxophonist who has long stood at the top rung of Brazilian musicians. “In the 1960s in Brazil, instrumental music was very strong. You could hear groups like Tamba Trio, Sambalanço Trio or Jongo Trio, and also the saxophonist J.T. Meirelles with the band Copa 5, which did this mixture of Brazilian music and jazz. The improvising brought in some phrases of bebop, but the compositions and the swing of the drums and bass had a quite Brazilian pulse.”

Jazz flutist Red Sullivan, an Irish-born fixture on Rio’s musical scene, sees one more essential link: “I’d say that Brazilian music is the only kind outside of jazz that swings.”

However they’re labeled, Rio teems with musicians who have true jazz chops. The guitarists include Hélio Delmiro, with whom Sarah Vaughan recorded two albums; and Lula Galvão, a longtime colleague of Ivan Lins and a participant on the 2013 Sunnyside release *Kenny Barron & the Brazilian Knights*. The same album



► Above: Revered composer and musician Hermeto Pascoal holds court at the Rio club TribOz in May Left: João Donato at home in Rio in April



features harmonica player Mauricio Einhorn, now 83 and the composer of several sambajazz standards, including the style’s anthem, “Batida Diferente” (“Different Beat”). Star trombonist Raul de Souza has recorded with Sonny Rollins; tenor saxophonist Marcelo Martins and trumpeter Jessé Sadoc are the cofounders of Orquestra Atlântica, a Brazilian-jazz big band. Kiko Freitas, one of the country’s top drummers, learned his art by studying Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa. Cliff Korman’s explorations of his adopted country’s music include the album *Gafieira Dance Brasil*, in which he and a revered Brazilian clarinetist and saxophonist, the late Paulo Moura, time-travel into the ballrooms of 1930s Rio.

Close to Sugar Loaf Mountain in the secluded neighborhood of Urca lives Donato, now 80. He shares a house with

his wife, son and an array of toy frogs, a nod to his best-known original tune, “A Rá” (“The Frog”). In April, just home from a concert in Paris, Donato—grinning, childlike and portly—joined me in his tropically colored music room and handed me his new septet CD, *Bluchanga*. His early style is intact: cool and airy but cerebral, much like the West Coast jazz of his 1950s idol, Shorty Rogers. In 1965, during a 12-year stay in the U.S., Donato made a dream entry into that world on his first U.S. recording, *Bud Shank & His Brazilian Friends*, for Pacific Jazz.

But would he call himself a jazz pianist? Donato pauses. “I am a Brazilian jazz pianist,” he explains. Improvisation, he notes, is at the heart of many styles. “Whether you are a jazz pianist or a Latin pianist or a bossa nova pianist, you will sustain any of those approaches if you have some jazz at the roots.”

Donato was part of the modernization of Brazilian music that occurred in Rio in the 1950s. The airwaves were filled then with the percussive but harmonically basic sounds of samba, along with the slower, more romantic *samba-canção*, sung in a tearfully bravura style by the star singers of the day.

Younger musicians had begun gathering at one another's homes, spinning coveted jazz albums from the States and trying to copy what they heard. Dick Farney, a beloved crooner and pianist, was so obsessed with American music that he had anglicized his given name (Farnésio Dutra e Silva) and learned to sing like Bing Crosby; later he led a quartet that imitated Dave Brubeck's and a big band that strained to sound like Stan Kenton's.

But original voices were emerging. At the lounge of Rio's Hotel Plaza, the future kingpins of bossa, notably João Gilberto and pianist Luiz Eça, hung on every note from one of the hippest piano players, singers and songwriters in town, Johnny Alf, whose harmonic conception opened up a new world of possibilities.

With bossa's debut, cool instrumental trios began to fill the clubs in Rio's fashionable beachside Zona Sul (South Zone). Now musicians could blow on the technically rich, jazz-inspired songs of Antonio Carlos Jobim, Carlos Lyra, Roberto Menescal and other bossa pioneers. "What were the bands playing?" asks Zuza Homem de Mello, one of Brazil's foremost musical authorities. "Brazilian jazz. What is Brazilian jazz? It's improvisations on themes written by Brazilians in the samba beat. Everywhere else in the world, they improvise on American themes."

But jazz and Brazilian music were cross-pollinating. Paulo Moura, a favorite of Jobim, was studying Benny Carter and Duke Ellington as well as bebop. Sérgio Mendes, the future leader of Brasil '66, was house pianist at the cradle of bossa, Beco das Garrafas (Bottles Bar) in Copacabana, where he played in a Horace Silver-influenced style. Drummer Edison Machado found ways to connect samba and jazz. "According to other drummers," says Korman, "he figured out how to move the swing of samba from the bass drum to the ride cymbal," thus heightening the jazz feel.

Singing at Beco das Garrafas in the early '60s was Leny Andrade. This April at a posh Italian restaurant near the club's original site, Andrade—now 72 and at the peak of her career—recalled the epiphany that had pushed her toward jazz. Andrade had spent a decade studying classical piano. Then in 1959, she switched on her radio



► Progenitors of "Brazilian jazz," clockwise from top left: Crooner and pianist Dick Farney, c. 1946; pianist Johnny Alf leads his trio, c. 1959; LPs by singer Leny Andrade from the mid-1960s; clarinetist and saxophonist Paulo Moura, c. 1975



God, I need to find a song in this universe and do it *my way*. I will not make my musicians play jazz, because jazz is jazz. But I can make my musicians play bossa nova and I can sing without lyrics. This song, everybody knows."

Brazil's "modern music" went worldwide in the early '60s thanks to Stan Getz, whose Brazilian-flavored recordings, notably "The Girl From Ipanema," a Grammy-winning No. 5 hit, made bossa world-famous. "Unfortunately," says Zuza Homem de Mello, "Stan didn't understand the kind of floating melody you need in order to improvise on a Brazilian theme. When you hear João Gilberto on those records, you hear Brazil. When you listen to Getz, you see an image of the U.S. There was a shock of two different mentalities, two styles that do not combine. On Getz's *Jazz Samba* album with Charlie Byrd, the syncopation is horrible. It should be soft; Byrd is heavy. That's not Brazilian music."

and heard her idol, torch singer and lyricist Dolores Duran, scatting in an Ella-derived fashion. Andrade dashed to the piano to try to figure out what Duran had sung. Soon she would tell her disappointed mother, a piano teacher, "Mom, I'm inside the new Brazilian music—the modern music. We have a new way, did you hear?"

Andrade went on to earn the admiration of Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan. Dizzy Gillespie loved her slow, heated take on "A Night in Tunisia," delivered entirely in scat. "When I began to sing in a lot of jazz festivals," she explains, "I said, my



►Left: Diogo Gomes
Right: Gilson Peranzetta
(left) and Mauro Senise at
the Rio theater Sala
Cecília Meireles
in May



Brazil's cultural and political climate changed drastically in 1964 with the start of a military dictatorship that lasted for 21 years. The breezy, bourgeois vibe that had nurtured bossa and sambajazz in Rio had faded; pop music turned tougher. Most foreign influences were seen as threats. When saxophonist Zé Nogueira came of age in the '70s, sambajazz had nearly vanished in Rio, so he played in a rock band while memorizing old jazz records. After studying at the

Berklee College of Music in Boston, he went home to find that jazz was on the upswing. An important radio station, Globo FM, had begun playing it; gradually a few clubs—Mistura Fina, Jazzmania—began to open. In 1985, Nogueira became co-curator of the Free Jazz Festival, a long-running tradition in Rio and São Paulo. "The radio was very important for us to make an audience," he says. But now, media support there for jazz is almost nil. "If you don't inject that kind of culture people cannot

assimilate it. Culture has to be stimulated."

Today, artists are fighting to keep the music alive. In 2014, Nogueira made it to Jazz at Lincoln Center with a project he coproduced, "Ouro Negro," an orchestral homage to Moacir Santos, Brazil's closest answer to Gil Evans. Back in Rio, a few clubs and lounges, such as the Restaurante Vizta in the Hotel Marina Palace in upscale Leblon, serve up some jazz.

As for true jazz clubs, right now there's only one. In 2008, trumpeter and ethno-

FROM LEFT: DANIEL ACHEIJIAN, JAMES GAVIN

JT ESSENTIALS: CONTEMPORARY BRAZILIAN JAZZ

LENY ANDRADE

**Iluminados (Enlightened): Leny Andrade
Canta Ivan Lins & Vítor Martins** (Diebold, 2014)



This recent album finds Andrade's thick, husky voice heavier than ever with worldly wisdom yet featherweight during the singer's jazzy flights. Here she delves into 11 classics by a historic Brazilian songwriting duo. Lyricist Martins writes profoundly of love, human nature and politics; Lins' music combines ultimate harmonic sophistication with hooks that are hard to forget. The musicians, including guitarist Leonardo Amuedo, pianist Fernando Merlino and drummer Téo Lima, inspire Andrade at every turn.

LEANDRO BRAGA TRIO

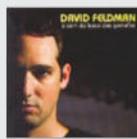
Fé Cega (Blind Faith) (Facil Brazil, 2013)



Rio-based pianist and arranger Braga writes luscious orchestrations for Brazil's greatest singers. But on this album, produced by Zé Nogueira, Braga, along with bassist Bruno Migliari and percussionist Marco Lobo, turns singer-composer Milton Nascimento's songs into graceful yet intense trio jazz, conceived with a symphonic sweep. Nascimento makes a haunting vocal appearance.

DAVID FELDMAN

**O Som do Beco das Garrafas
(The Sound of Bottles Bar)** (EMI Brazil, 2009)



On his debut CD, this Rio-born pianist, joined by bassist Sérgio Barrozo and veteran drummer Paulo Braga, sparkingly recreates the trio sambajazz of the fabled Copacabana nightspot where bossa nova bloomed. Feldman's muscular playing combines bossa with a touch of Monk.

GILSON PERANZZETTA & MAURO SENISE

Dois na Rede (Two in the Hammock) (Fina Flor, 2015)



This CD, recorded live in Rio, marks the 25-year partnership of two Brazilian musical aristocrats. Peranzetta plays piano with the same architectural grandeur that he brings to his acclaimed orchestral writing. On flute and saxophone, Senise lyrically conjures up every sound in the forest. Together, he and Peranzetta create a panorama of their country's musical heritage. The songs come from the cream of Brazil's composers, including Chico Buarque, Carlos Lyra, Dorival Caymmi and Edu Lobo.

JAMES GAVIN

► Soprano saxophonist
Zé Nogueira



musicologist Mike Ryan opened TribOz on a back street in Lapa, a gritty downtown nightlife center synonymous with samba. For three nights a week Ryan hosts local artists at TribOz, whose bare brick walls and African art pieces give it a Bohemian feel. He designed and named it with a goal of promoting peaceful exchange in an often violent city. "I thought, 'We're all part of the tribe of the human race,'" he explains. "'Tribes' is *tribos* in Portuguese. But I'm an Aussie. So I thought, 'OK. Tribos, Oz. TribOz.'"

Ryan barely weathered his first year, but the place has grown by word of mouth, and musicians clamor to play at TribOz. From time to time a gem turns up. Occasionally on Ryan's stage is trumpeter Diogo Gomes, 24. Were he in New York, Gomes might well be a candidate for the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Studious, well-mannered, classically trained and bursting with technique, Gomes has played in many settings: in the band of Lapa star Rogê, a samba-funk singer-composer; in choro groups; in guitarist-composer Mario Adnet's Orquestra Jobim Jazz; and alongside singer Wanda Sá, a bossa veteran.

The son of a trombonist, Gomes grew up on his father's collection of jazz records. Asked to name his heroes, he lists Chet Baker, Freddie Hubbard, Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan, Wynton Marsalis, Greg Gisbert, Lew Soloff, Art Farmer and Claudio Roditi. Does all that make him a jazz musician? He answers humbly. "I love jazz, but I'm not American. The American is the jazz musician because these are his roots. Some things that I play, I put a little of my jazz knowledge into, but to say I'm a jazz musician, I think, would be an insult to jazz."

But Red Sullivan disagrees. "I think he's an extraordinary trumpet talent and an exceptional soloist. Think Freddie Hubbard, but with the poetic sensibility of Chet Baker and the most glorious sound."

Zé Nogueira would rather see music of all kinds as a cultural exchange. "The world discovered bossa nova because jazz artists recorded it, and it became a jazz rhythm," he says. "Samba, you can change a little bit and it becomes bossa nova. And maybe if you change it a little more it becomes choro or *baião*. What is jazz, anyway? These are just imaginary boundaries that you can cross." **JT**

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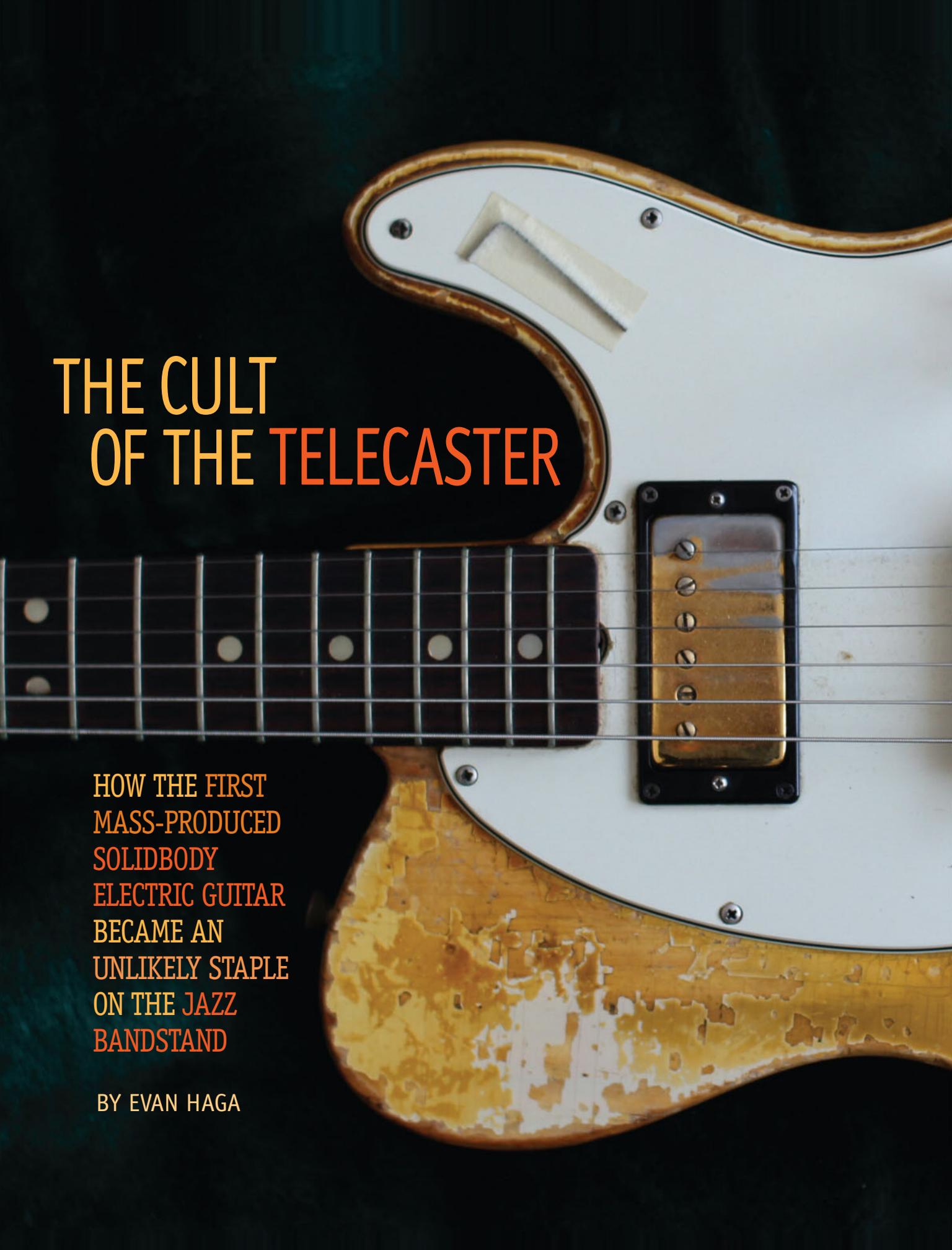
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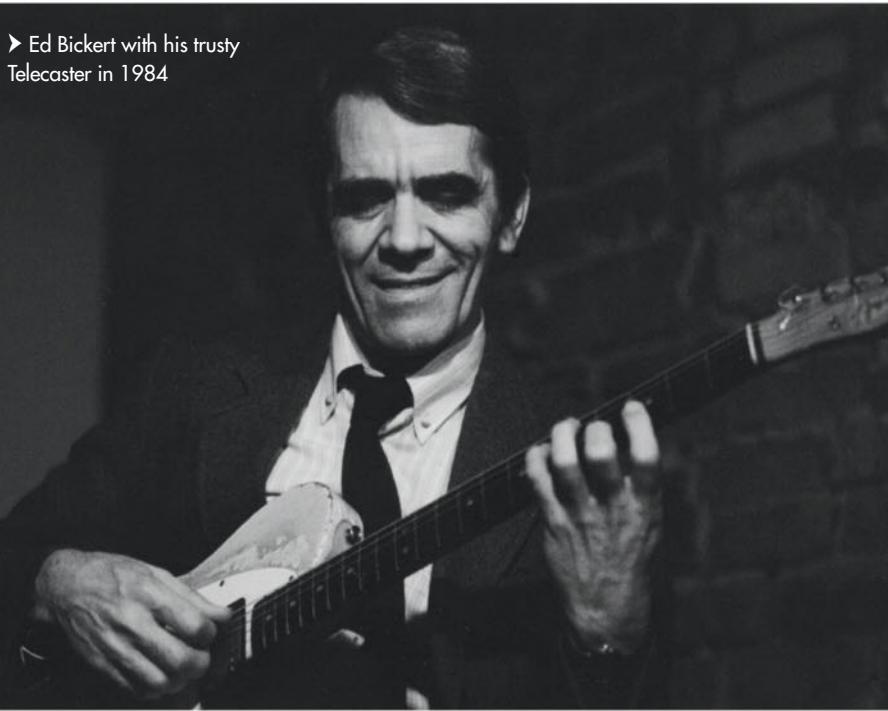
BY EVAN HAGA

► The Fender Telecaster, customized with a Gibson humbucker, famously played by the great Canadian jazz guitarist Ed Bickert



JEFF BICKERT

► Ed Bickert with his trusty Telecaster in 1984



The high wall that stretches along the left side of the Guitar Center near Manhattan's Union Square is an excellent place to survey the current market of mass-produced electric guitars. I do this on a semi-regular basis, because I love electric guitars and I sometimes get homesick; Guitar Centers tend to be identical no matter what city or suburb they're located in.

If you make these pilgrimages again and again over a number of years, the assortment of guitars on that wall can seem static, but only in a way that proves old adages about not fixing broken things: Electric guitars are a remarkable example of industrial design that was refined, even perfected, close to the inception of its industry. The Fender instruments, including Stratocasters and a stock of Jazzmasters and Jaguars that has grown in recent years to meet demand from indie-rockers, extend from behind the cash register and out into the melee of the showroom. Occupying only their fair share of wall space are variants of Fender's Telecaster—the oldest of all the guitar models on view and perhaps the most perfect.

The Telecaster is generally regarded as the first mass-produced solidbody electric guitar. In its standard form, the instrument features a body shaped from a single type

of wood, particularly ash or alder, with a single cutaway that allows access to the upper frets. Mounted in the body are two single-coil pickups, one close to the neck of the instrument and another angled near its bridge. (In guitar-speak, single-coils are the more treble- and midrange-oriented companions to fuller-sounding humbucking pickups, like those on the Gibson Les Paul; single-coils can create a buzz or hum, which humbuckers, consisting of two coils, cancel out.) Classically, the Telecaster has a neck wherein the frets are fitted directly onto the maple wood; there is no rosewood or ebony fingerboard, though it's not uncommon to see a Telecaster with a proper rosewood fingerboard.

Over the past 65 years, on account of its clear, honest sound and workmanlike durability and affordability, the model has been a staple in all sorts of American musical styles and situations, from dance bands and studio work to blues, rock and roll, R&B and especially country; no other guitar has a more dedicated allegiance to a specific genre than the Telecaster does to the music of Nashville. In the same way, no other single guitar model has seen such a large, enthusiastic and codified culture develop around it. Just as the elegant yet modular design of the Ford Coupe bore a society of hot-rodders with its own heroes and vernacular, the Telecaster

harbors a subset of guitar enthusiasts who endlessly modify their instruments and revere a lineage of musicians referred to as Telemasters—players like Roy Buchanan, Danny Gatton and Arlen Roth, who've mixed and matched American styles with a homespun, trickster-like virtuosity that exploits the specific design elements of the guitar. But in modern jazz, where the tone of choice is so often the thick, warm, matte-finish sound associated with high-priced instruments handcrafted by expert luthiers, the Telecaster and its high-treble calling-card tone—a.k.a. "twang"—have been an anomaly. Or so it would seem.

In the past year alone, I've seen the Telecaster—and many custom-built Tele-style guitars not manufactured by Fender—played across the spectrum of current jazz styles, by many of the most important jazz guitarists working today. In the summer of 2014, there was John Scofield at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, traversing postbop-inflected Afrobeat, funk and fusion using a Tele copy made by the Japanese brand Ibanez. During a regular hit at the 55 Bar in Greenwich Village, electric bebopper Mike Stern concocted his signature sound by filtering his namesake Yamaha guitar, an instrument ultimately based on a Tele once owned by Roy Buchanan, through a chorus effect and stereo amp setup. At Iridium in the Theater District in May, Adam Rogers twisted his '56 Tele through a harmonically savvy, Nashville-flavored blues solo on bassist John Patitucci's R&B tribute "JLR." Farther downtown at Jazz Standard in April, Julian Lage, playing a vintage-Tele-styled Danocaster, led a trio on original material that combined astounding jazz learning with the bittersweet tunefulness of American folksong. Bill Frisell, who employed his Tele collection during his recent multi-program residency at Jazz at Lincoln Center, has made the guitar into an inextricable part of his sound and image over the past decade-plus. "It's one of the first mass-produced electric guitars, and they somehow nailed it right at the beginning," he tells me.

"It's so simple, but it's so versatile. I could just use it for..." he continues, trailing off. "[I can] just go to any kind of extreme." Like Frisell's musicianship, the instrument boasts a rare adaptability as well as a clean-slate purity; in other words, it allows the player to cast a wide stylistic net while seeking out a personal voice. And its telltale

characteristics, both physical and tonal, can offer the possibility of an alternative to jazz-hollowbody clichés. As guitarist Jim Campilongo puts it, “To me, Louis Armstrong doesn’t sound like a Gibson ES-175 through a Polytone amp.”

THE STORY OF HOW LEO FENDER

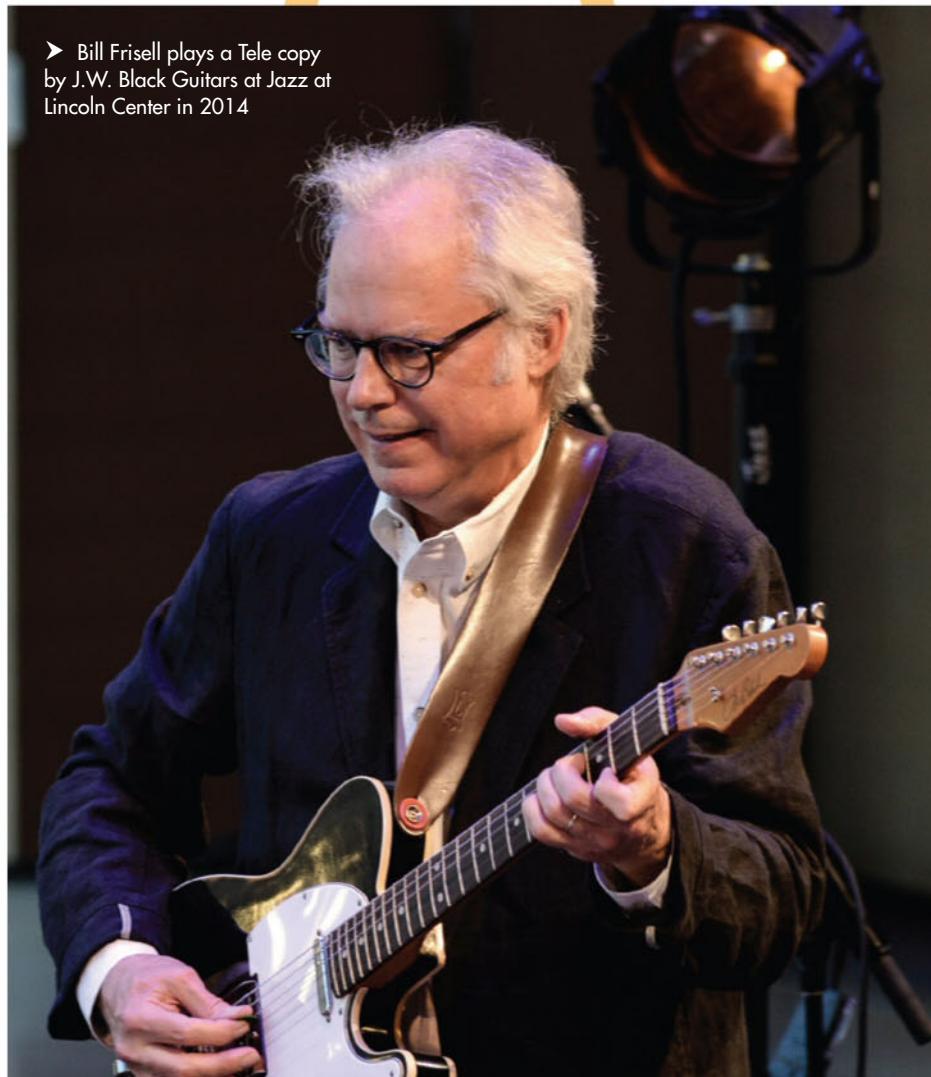
developed and manufactured his solidbody guitars is one of those tales of American entrepreneurship that, like the rise of Henry Ford or Ray Kroc, is difficult to fathom, mainly because what was once an innovation that caused trepidation—scorn, even—is now a fact of our popular culture. The roots of this narrative, if not directly engaged with jazz, certainly entangle with the genre.

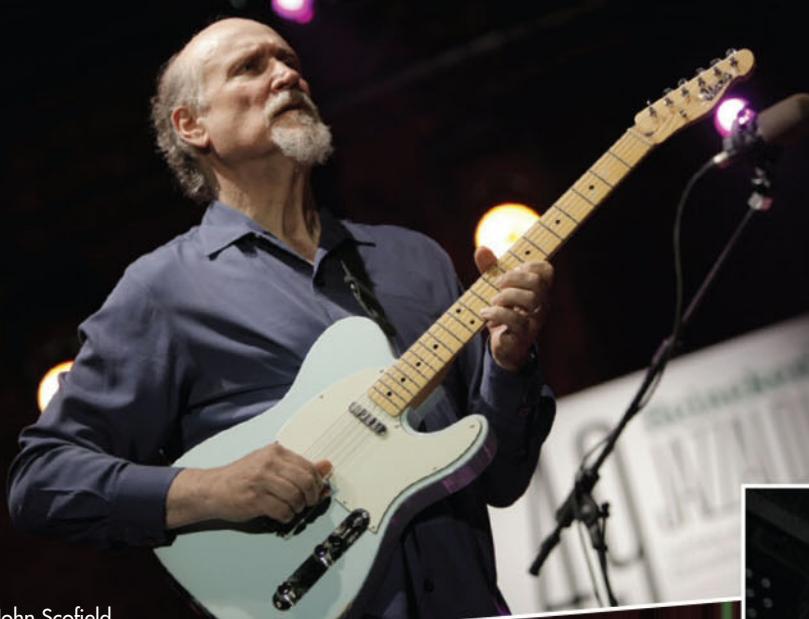
Electrified guitars had existed during the first half of the 20th century, their development spurred on by acoustic players desperate to cut through the din of noisy ballrooms and brassy jazz and dance bands. (Jazz fans should already be familiar with a key figure in this evolution: Charlie Christian, the innovator of horn-derived single-note lines whose Gibson hollowbody guitar had an electromagnetic pickup near its neck as early as the mid-'30s.) Solidbody electric guitars had existed prior to the Telecaster—Bigsby manufactured a single-pickup model for country star Merle Travis, for one—but weren't accepted as serious instruments; Gibson's Les Paul, produced largely as a reaction to the Telecaster's runaway sales, wouldn't be released until 1952.

An accountant who floundered during the Great Depression, Fender opened a radio repair shop in the late '30s and soon branched out into manufacturing PA systems and guitar pickups. He wasn't a musician—at least one player who helped him develop his products described him as pitch-deaf, and unable to tune his guitars—but he did love music, especially Western swing and Hawaiian pop, both styles to which the lap-steel guitar is essential. In the first half of the '40s, he and Doc Kauffman, an engineer who'd worked for Rickenbacker during the '30s, collaborated to patent a new pickup for electric lap steel and manufacture lap steel and amplifier sets. They formed a short-lived brand, K&F Manufacturing Corporation, in 1945.

In the latter '40s, Fender began building a solidbody guitar out from the general concept of the lap steel. He used Western

► Ted Greene was a masterful guitarist and educator with a striking collection of highly customized Teles

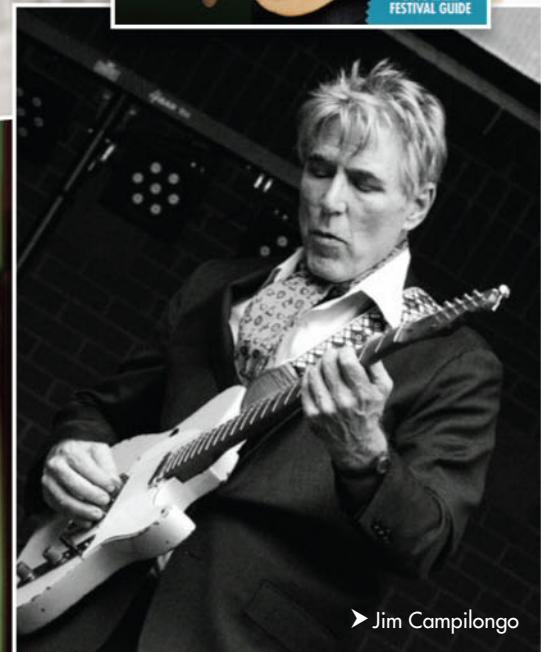




► John Scofield



► Adam Rogers



► Jim Campilongo

swing musicians, like guitarist and future Stratocaster tester Bill Carson, of Bob Wills' Texas Playboys, as his research-and-development sector. "In [Leo's] mind, it was about making something that was easily serviceable and easily manufactured, and sounded good and worked," says Justin Norvell, the current vice president of product development at Fender; also necessary was that these new guitars not feed back at loud volumes like the amplified acoustic and semi-acoustics that preceded them. Fender introduced the Esquire in 1950, the Telecaster's anteced-

ent bearing one single-coil pickup near the bridge. A twin-pickup Telecaster-style guitar debuted later that same year as the Broadcaster, with an electronics configuration that blended the pickups in a fashion inspired by jazz hollowbodies. (Today, the wiring chooses either pickup or both, with dedicated volume and tone controls.) Legal pressure from Gretsch, manufacturer of a "Broadkaster" line of drums, necessitated a name change. Piggybacking on the burgeoning television phenomenon, the Telecaster was born.

As Norvell explains, it was Leo Fender's



To many guitar makers and players devoted to the painstaking tradition of handcrafted arch-tops, the idea of a mass-produced solidbody instrument consisting of a single wood was disrespectful to an art form; even more absurd to them was the neck, which bolted onto the guitar's body and demanded the player fret the maple wood that would typically be capped by rosewood or ebony. Guitarists in commercial and country music came around, but hardcore jazzbos stuck with their Gibsons, D'Angelicos and the like, almost as a rule.



DURING THE FUSION ERA, WHEN

jazz-trained players took up solidbody guitars to handle the sonics and volume of rock, the most popular guitarists—like John McLaughlin, who also played a Fender Mustang—opted for the familiar feel and powerful pickups of the Gibson Les Paul. But two true-blue jazz players best known for their contributions during the 1970s and '80s proved the Telecaster was safe for swinging music. The first was Ed Bickert, a brilliant Toronto-based

picker recognized as a musician's musician and, especially since his hard-lined retirement in 2000, a sort of password for hipness among guitarists. His highest-profile stand, a mid-'70s run with Paul Desmond that yielded the all-star CTI quartet date *Pure Desmond*, came via the recommendation of friend Jim Hall. With Hall, Bickert shared a brainy harmonic sense that could seem at once homey, even romantic, and surprising. Tonally, he sidestepped the Tele's patented sunlit sound and used it to convincingly impersonate a conventional jazzbox, even replacing the single-coil pickup in the neck position with a humbucker.

Reached at his home in Toronto in late May, Bickert, 82, is amiable and articulate, and he describes his relationship to the Telecaster as more coincidence than calling. He'd been "playing the usual [instruments] that most of the jazz guitar players were," but as the 1960s wore on he began looking for an ax that would better meet the demands of his studio work. Why the Tele specifically? Well, why not? "It could have been any other kind of solidbody, I guess," he says. "It's just one of these things

where I got used to it, felt comfortable with it and it's certainly very hard to smash it. So that's why I played it all those years." As far as receiving any flak from the jazz cognoscenti, Bickert recalls none, with one chuckle-worthy exception. At a gig in Montreal, broadcaster Ted O'Reilly jokingly introduced a band by saying, "Bill Mays on a piano by Yamaha" and "Ed Bickert on a guitar by Fisher-Price."

The other jazz master in question is Ted Greene—a name Bickert says he's heard frequently over the years, even if he's never listened to the man's music. Bickert can be forgiven: Greene, who died at age 58 in 2005, released only one album under his own name, 1977's *Solo Guitar*, a recital to rival the best of Joe Pass, and was recognized most as a tireless educator whose study of harmony took on near-scientific dimensions. (His instructional books, especially *Chord Chemistry*, are still in-demand today.) He was also a Telecaster collector known for his wild electronic customizations that somehow allowed the guitar to retain its well-intonated, wet, harp-like radiance. Greene's Tele-buying habit began in the



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mid-'60s when he acquired a '53 model, but it was his '52 Tele that the Fender brand used as source material to design its American-made reissue in 1982. The biggest reason, explains Norvell, was the neck shape. "Back in the day, they were made by hand and they were all made a little differently," he says. "Today, you can pick up 10 guitars and the neck shapes will be pretty similar. But back then, here's a thin one, here's a thick one, here's a heavy one. ... We had to find a great one from somebody who really knew the difference."

When that Telecaster reissue was released in 1982, Mike Stern was doing smart work with Miles Davis and moving quickly into the upper-echelon of jazz guitarists. Stern was using a Stratocaster in the trumpeter's band,

► Mike Stern with his Tele-inspired signature model guitar by Yamaha



but had already established strong Tele roots. He was born in Boston in 1953, but grew up playing in rock bands in Washington, D.C., absorbing firsthand that city's Telecaster-crazy roots-music scene, a singular blend of cosmopolitan and country aesthetics embodied by Danny Gatton and Roy Buchanan. One of his Telecasters he bought off Gatton, who used to repair and modify Stern's guitars; Gatton had secured the instrument from Buchanan and was using it as a spare.

In the early to mid-'70s Stern was immersed in bebop at Berklee and favored bop's official ax, the Gibson ES-175. "Pat Metheny heard me play the Tele—I played it for one gig, one kind of ensemble that we had—and he said, 'Man, you should play that thing all the time, it sounds great,'" Stern recalls. "So I just played it more and more for everything." Then as now, it was the instrument's versatility that hooked him: He could string together singing bop lines with Jerry Bergonzi and bend blues-flecked jazz-rock with trumpeter Tiger Okoshi. He lost that guitar in an armed robbery in Boston, but made his way back to it in a roundabout way: After losing more guitars, including another Tele, when Jaco Pastorius' road manager left the instruments unattended outside JFK airport, Stern started playing a copy of the Buchanan instrument built by Boston luthier Michael Aronson. That guitar became the basis for Stern's Yamaha signature model.

A couple years back I caught Stern in a furiously swinging set at Birdland with John Scofield's Hollowbody Band—a curious name since both Stern and Scofield, veterans of the same Miles Davis outfit from the early to mid-'80s, played Tele-style guitars. "At that point I was really having fun playing jazz on the Telecaster, and Mike had one," says Scofield, though he maintains that his go-to instrument for most straightahead situations is his 1981 Ibanez AS-200, a design based on Gibson's ES-335. Still, as a teen, practicing on the '66 Fender Tele he bought in high school, he discovered how jazz-capable the guitar could be. "You can roll off the treble and play the neck pickup and it sounds remarkably jazz-like," he says, "and the real shining example of this is Ed Bickert." He sold that guitar in 1968 to buy a Les Paul, but got it back about eight years ago, after a fan in Texas realized he had it and sold it to Scofield at a typically sky-high vintage-market price. Today, he often opts for his

Ibanez Tele copy in R&B and fusion settings, and points out its light weight and ability to cut through a mix.

Like Scofield, the great jazz guitarist Adam Rogers also uses the Telecaster as one weapon within a larger arsenal, and values its ability to penetrate the dense air of a gig. He obtained his first Tele in 2002, started playing it more regularly a couple years later, and found it fit especially well within the sonic and stylistic context of saxophonist Chris Potter's fusion-inclined Underground group. "The Rhodes [electric piano] and the Telecaster, given the ranges of frequency that you would associate with each of them, seemed to fit together best," says Rogers. "The Telecaster has a very potentially mid-rangey sound, and the Rhodes is very dark and bassy. ... And there was just something I really liked about the sound of the Telecaster and the tenor doubling melodies." Rare for jazz Tele players, he often goes for what he thinks is the guitar's truest sound, its unforgiving bridge pickup, the position that "exposes everything; it's like there's nowhere to hide."

For Rogers, the Tele represented new timbres as well as fresh techniques and a parallel world of music history to explore—namely country players from Jimmy Bryant to James Burton to Brent Mason. "As soon as I hear the sound of a Telecaster it influences the kind of lines I play [and] my approach to a particular piece, because I love the sound of that instrument in its classic form," he says.

INDEED, THE TELECASTER'S TWANGY

genealogy is vast. Telecaster music, if you deconstruct its pedigree, is profound, or at least profoundly American: Its bedrock is Nashville and Western swing, including the country-jazz of Chet Atkins, Hank Garland and others, but it also swallows up the midcentury jazz-pop of Les Paul, early R&B and rock and roll, the blues-jazz virtuosity of Lonnie Johnson and Charlie Christian and the Gypsy jazz of Django Reinhardt. (It's no coincidence that John Jorgenson, a session ace and a member of the supergroup the Hellecasters, enjoys a parallel career carrying the Django torch.) Gatton, while certainly not on Jim Hall's plateau harmonically, did record with Joey DeFrancesco and in a Blue Note session with Joshua Redman and Roy Hargrove.

Still, if musicality is an objective, the ax can be a slippery slope. Burrow too far into its specialized techniques—it's behind-the-

nut string bends and Buchanan-evoking volume swells, to name just two—and elements like melody and songcraft become overtaken by gimmicks. One player who seems to split the difference between Tele-based virtuosity and the broader tenets of good music is New York-based Jim Campilongo, a bandleader and a sideman to Norah Jones and others. Impressed by pedal-steel master Buddy Emmons and Roy Buchanan early on, Campilongo developed his reputation around the Tele sound. (Fender's Custom Shop even produced a Campilongo signature model.) Today, he says he feels boxed-in by the association. "Some guy said at the end of [a recent] gig—and it was fine; I was happy he liked the music—he said, 'You're my favorite Tele guy,'" says Campilongo. "And I hear that and I always feel like I wouldn't mind if someone said, 'You're in my top 50 guitar players.' ... Sometimes I feel like the Tele-guy thing plagues me a little bit." He has a point: Listen to his latest release, *Last Night, This Morning*, and you'll find a melodist who as a rule doesn't let chops eclipse tune, especially on ballads. "[They're] compositions where the song comes first and then I figure out how to solo over the damn thing," he says. Live, Campilongo has a jazz player's penchant for harmony-pushing tension, and his trio with drummer Josh Dion and the progressive jazz bassist Chris Morrissey offers a loose, textural, highly interactive dynamic—it can easily evoke Bill Frisell's band with bassist Tony Scherr and drummer Kenny Wollesen.

Frisell explains that he reconnected with the Telecaster during the 1990s, decades after scouring Denver pawnshops for Fenders as a boy and then detouring through all kinds of instruments earlier in his career. (From a critic's standpoint, you can't help but notice how his adopting the Telecaster coincided with his increasing interest in classic American music and the pop of his youth.) Today he plays a diverse collection of Telecaster-style instruments, some made by Fender and some not, including guitars featuring Tele bodies but necks with the shorter scale length of a Gibson (often thought of as more jazz-friendly). He likes the Telecaster's logical, straightforward layout, ease of customization and lower-output pickups, which handle his many effects pedals without overdriving his amplifier and facilitate an even, clear frequency range. Most of all, he thinks of the Tele as a direct route to a player's personality. "It just depends on who you hear playing it," he says. "I think the sound,

99 percent of it comes from our imagination. ... I [saw this video] with Joe Pass playing a Fender Jaguar, and he sounded like Joe Pass."

Twenty-seven-year-old guitar phenom-enon Julian Lage doesn't share Frisell's idiosyncratic, less-is-more attack, but he does harbor similar affinities for Ameri-cana, melody and the Tele, which has in recent years helped him move toward a more

independent sound. Like Frisell, Lage relishes its directness. "I like the Telecaster for all the things that it's not promoting," he told me at his apartment this past winter, before also praising the guitar's tonal balance. "That," he said, pointing at his white Danocaster Tele copy, "feels way closer to my 1930s Martin [acoustic] than an archtop guitar does." **JT**

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Game-changing Gear

AUDIOPHILE EQUIPMENT HAS DEVELOPED RADICALLY SINCE THE BIRTH OF JAZZTIMES. HERE ARE THE PRODUCTS THAT SPARKED REVOLUTIONS IN SOUND

By Brent Butterworth

It's hard to imagine that when *JazzTimes* launched as *Radio Free Jazz* in 1970, transistors were still in the process of replacing tubes, mono records were still widely available and "portable audio" usually meant an AM pocket radio. Back then, one had to spend thousands of inflation-adjusted dollars to get decent sound. A good audio system took up a large chunk of a living room, required a lot of knowledge to set up and still didn't sound all that great, at least compared to the gear we have now.

In honor of *JT*'s 45th anniversary, let's take a look back at the products that revolutionized home audio, presented in chronological order. Although they're all great, these aren't necessarily the *best* audio products of their time; rather, they're the pieces of hardware that had the most impact on the systems audiophiles enjoy today.

Advent Model 200 cassette tape deck (1970)

The Model 200 was the first high-quality home cassette deck, with Dolby B noise reduction and compatibility with chromium dioxide. The Model 200 turned the cassette into a medium for high-quality audio, and in the process spawned numerous movements in audio: home recording, portable audio, the decline of the vinyl record—and piracy.



▶ LS3/5A monitor speakers by Rogers



▶ Linn Sondek LP12

Linn Sondek LP12 turntable (1972)

Most audiophiles consider the Sondek LP12 to be the first real high-end turntable, and the first to demonstrate how important the turntable is to the sound of an audio system. The LP12 remains a standard by which other turntables are judged; it's still in production and many enthusiasts continue to swear by it.

The LP12 remains a standard by which other turntables are judged; it's still in production and many enthusiasts continue to swear by it.

Audio Research Dual 75 amplifier (1972)

Back in 1972, almost everyone considered tubes obsolete and assumed they'd fade into history. Audio Research had the audacity to insist that tubes still sounded better, and with the Dual 75 and other amps that followed, played a major role in keeping the technology alive. Forty-three years later, tubes are still going strong.

Mark Levinson JC-2 preamp (1974)

In the 1960s and '70s, audio gear was often judged more by the number of knobs and switches on the front panel than by the quality of the sound. By dispensing with tone controls—which Levinson believed added complexity and reduced sound quality—the JC-2 set the standard for the minimalist preamps that still dominate high-end audio today.

BBC LS3/5A speaker (1975)

The BBC designed the LS3/5A as a high-quality compact monitor speaker for mobile recording, but audiophiles quickly embraced it as the first true high-quality mini-speaker, thanks in large part to its realistic stereo imaging. It was produced by several manufacturers, including Harbeth, KEF and Rogers.



Krell KSA-100 amplifier (1981)

The backbreaking monster amps powering most of today's ultra-high-end systems trace their origin to the KSA-100. It's a Class A 100-watt-per-channel design, which basically means its transistors run full-on all the time and it consumes huge amounts of power. Audiophiles found its combination of sheer muscle and sonic delicacy irresistible.

Meridian MCD CD player (1985)

When Sony launched the CD with the tagline "Perfect Sound Forever," the assumption was that all CD players would sound identical. By starting with a Philips CD drive and replacing its audio circuitry, Meridian was the first to achieve digital sound that demanding listeners could embrace.

Wilson WATT 3/Puppy 2 speaker (1991)

Audiophiles think nothing of spending tens of thousands of dollars on a piece of audio gear these days, but with the WATT/Puppy speaker, Wilson Audio was, arguably, the first to make the case that some gear is worth five figures. The second version, the \$10,940/pair WATT 3/Puppy 2, was so popular dealers sometimes had difficulty keeping it in stock.

TacT Millennium amplifier (1998)

Most of the amps built into today's mainstream audio products use high-efficiency Class D (or digital, or switching) technology, but back in 1998 Class D was brand-new—and audiophiles were wary. The Millennium won them over with its transparent, detailed, dynamic sound. Later versions added correction for room acoustics, now a feature found in most audio/video receivers.



► TacT Millennium amplifier

Wavelength Audio Brick digital-to-analog converter (2005)

In the early part of the new millennium, the trend toward computer-based audio was clear, but many audiophiles didn't consider the sound quality up to snuff. Using a new technology that let the digital-to-analog converter control the computer instead of vice versa, the Brick proved that a computer with a USB connection could deliver better sound than a CD player—and in the process launched the concept of high-quality desktop audio.



HiFiMan HE-5 headphone (2009)

By reintroducing audiophiles to the spacious, natural sound of flat-panel planar-magnetic drivers, the HE-5 helped spark a resurgence in high-end headphone sound—and helped spawn today's new generation of hardcore headphone enthusiasts. **JT**



► HiFiMan HE-5

Modes of Joe

DON BYRON GOES INSIDE THE CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES OF TENOR GIANT JOE HENDERSON

I first experienced tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson's playing on the 1966 Lee Morgan record *Delightfulee*—a record I literally stole from my parents' basement. With some musicians, hearing them as a sideman on just half of an album—the other half of *Delightfulee* features a large ensemble playing arrangements by Oliver Nelson—might seem like a small sample, but, oddly, Henderson can sound more like himself on other people's records. In fact, his most iconic turns happen on other people's records: Morgan, Kenny Dorham, Larry Young, McCoy Tyner,

Nat Adderley. In each case he morphs himself, channeling many modes of playing, reflecting the language of the musicians around him.

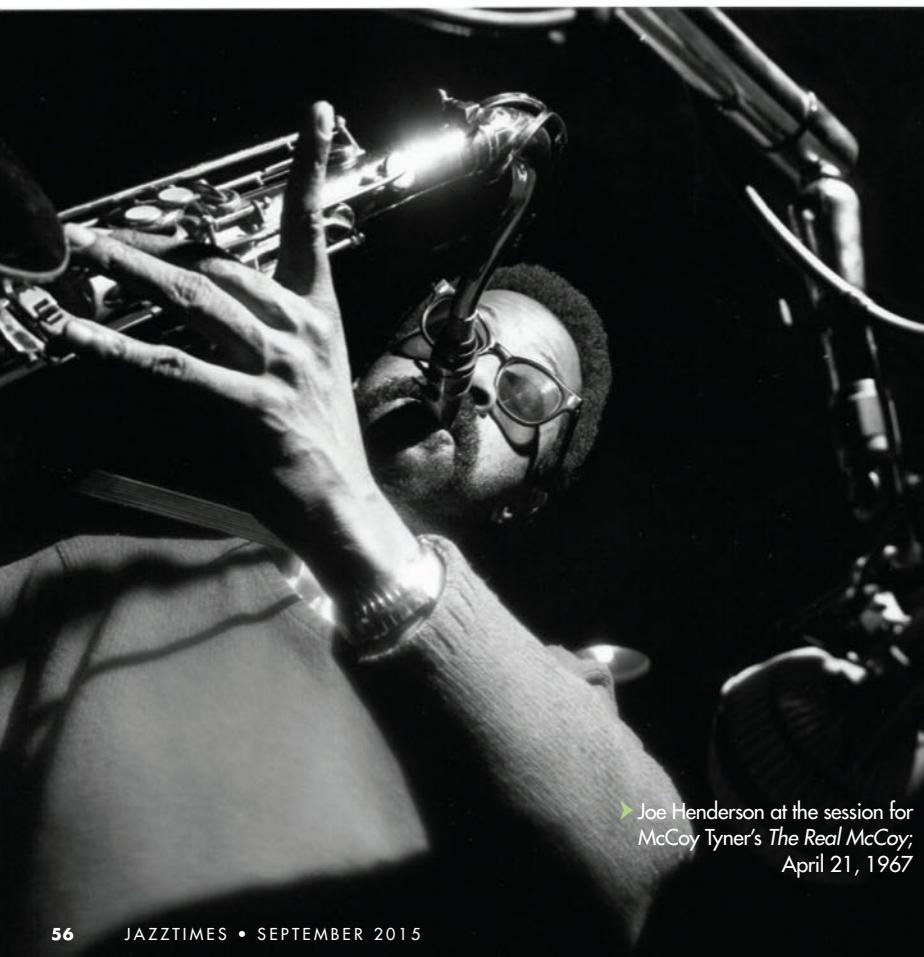
During my studies with George Russell, I found that Henderson seemed to reflect a lot of the values in Russell's *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*. His extensive use of the Lydian Major seventh flat five, and his pioneering use of the Minor seventh flat five not just as the ii chord in a minor progression but as a harmonic destination in itself ("Inner Urge," ex. A), suggest an exposure to Russell's *Concept* or some

similar sense of organization. (Henderson actually played on Russell and Bill Evans' *Living Time* and recorded Russell's "Ezz-Thetic" with Grant Green.)

What are some other hallmarks of Joe Henderson's style? The singing quality of Sonny Rollins, a thorough study of Bird, an understanding of Middle Eastern elements, gutbucket R&B tenor playing, a love of hemiola and the motivic tendencies of Lester Young all come into play. In interviews he talks a lot about Stan Getz (certainly a child of Young), though it's hard to pick up the physical influence of Getz. There is a group of quotes that recur in his playing: One particular blues figure appears in many Henderson solos ("Straight Ahead," "Una Mas," ex. B, both found on Dorham's *Una Mas* LP), in addition to fragments of popular songs such as "Heat Wave," "Johnny One Note" and "Without a Song." He quoted songs that interested him intervallically.

The thing that really makes a Henderson solo blossom is his ability to develop interval motifs. One senses his total commitment to groups of intervals, and his playing suggests a practice regimen. Once he is committed to playing a group of intervals, his commitment extends to every step of his modal choice: all seven positions (of a seven-note scale) in all 12 keys. This figure (ex. C) appears in several of Henderson's solos. The figure itself is six notes, and more often than not he uses it rhythmically to create a kind of 4 over 3 hemiola. While the figure is made up entirely of seconds and thirds, the qualities (major, minor) of the intervals change with each diatonic step.

Composers and improvisers can define chord changes in the listeners' ears not only by spelling chords up from the root, but by maintaining a constant interval structure and letting the changing accidentals and subsequent changing interval



► Joe Henderson at the session for McCoy Tyner's *The Real McCoy*, April 21, 1967

HENDERSON IS ONE OF THE LEAST PREDICTABLE IMPROVISERS,
EVEN WHEN HE USES ELEMENTS YOU'VE HEARD BEFORE.
HIS PLAYING IS EPISODIC, YET HIS SOLOS HANG TOGETHER AS A SINGLE STATEMENT.

qualities do their work. Something in the human brain can assemble harmonic content and movement from the sustaining of one pattern through a single chord or a lengthy progression, changing the accidentals needed to fit each chord. The work of many composers, including Bach and Brahms, is built on these techniques. In short, one uses a figure to drag the listener through the changes. The figure could be anything: a scale in thirds or this Prez-like figure (from Tyner's "Passion Dance," ex. D). In this excerpt from "Tres Palabras" (ex. E), he drags a figure through a series of chords while cleverly dividing the bar into 11 parts.

Like many of the modern-sounding saxophonists of his era, Henderson uses alternate fingerings generated from study of the overtone series. The source of this may be pedagogical, probably emanating from one of the most influential saxophone books, Sigurd M. Rascher's *Top-Tones for the Saxophone*, an oddly melodic study of saxophone overtones. It was most certainly a big part of the pedagogy of Joe Allard, who taught both John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy. Henderson was a student of Larry Teal, an equally admired saxophone teacher. While Coltrane tended to use the alternate fingerings to repeat a note (with a slightly altered texture), Henderson's use of the overtones is quite different. Sometimes he spins a Rascher-like melody ("Passion Dance," "The Real McCoy," ex. F); other times he uses alternate fingerings of the same note to play a constant trill—using the alternate fingering the way a guitar player might apply distortion ("Black," "Mode for Joe," ex. G).

The musical score consists of seven examples (A-G) of Henderson's playing. The score is in G# locrian mode (D Lyd +IV). Examples A, B, and C show rhythmic patterns. Examples D, E, and F show melodic figures over chords. Example G shows a constant trill. The score includes measure numbers 11, 14, 17, 20, and 25.

What makes his playing unique is the way he combines all of these disparate techniques. His solo on "Passion Dance" goes from the most inside playing to a substitution that's further out, to noise, to polyrhythms that he builds sixteenths on top of. He is one

of the least predictable improvisers, even when he uses elements you've heard before. His playing is episodic, yet his solos hang together as a single statement. He is seldom successfully imitated, as his work reflects a lifetime of uniquely varied musical study. **JT**

Don Byron is an acclaimed clarinetist, saxophonist and composer, and an assistant professor in the music department at Metropolitan State University of Denver. As a composer, his most recent recording is Infinite Winds (Sunnyside), featuring his Concerto for Clarinet and Wind Ensemble with clarinet soloist Evan Ziporyn.



Gear Head



Jazz Session Trainer

Simply put, Larry Dunlap's *Jazz Session Trainer* (Hal Leonard), a 127-page book with audio-download code, is an essential text for aspiring improvisers: It deserves a spot on the music stand next to the *Real Book*, the *Bird Omnibook* and your method books of choice. In authoritative yet inviting prose, he advises on jam-session etiquette, provides a compendium of etudes and licks for study, discusses common intros and endings you'll hear at sessions, and offers tips on constructing an efficient practice regimen. Finally, clean chord charts (no melodies) and rhythm-section play-along tracks are included for 50 must-know tunes. Spend some time with the *Trainer* before you write your name down on the sign-up sheet. (\$24.99) halleonard.com

New From PRS

One of the best special events related to a gear company we've attended in recent years took place in Baltimore in June, when Paul Reed Smith Guitars celebrated its 30th anniversary by inviting John McLaughlin to sit in with Col. Bruce Hampton and the Aquarium Rescue Unit, the Zappa-indebted roots band featuring another guitar virtuoso, Jimmy Herring. (Perhaps even more noteworthy for jazz nerds was a reunion of McLaughlin and drummer Dennis Chambers, who played in Smith's own band.)

At the start of its fourth decade, the Maryland-based company has released a couple of axes jazz- and fusion-inclined players should keep an eye out for. The P245 Semi-Hollow (\$3,879 street; with "10-Top": \$4,479) is a single-cutaway guitar with a classic vibe, a shorter, 24 1/2-inch scale length and a unique electronics scheme: two humbuckers, an LR Baggs/PRS piezo—and the ability to utilize each pickup system separately or blend the two. Also noteworthy is PRS' new Vela (\$1,279-\$1,399 online), part of the brand's more affordable S2 line. That guitar features a Fender- and Mosrite-evoking offset waist, a Starla-model humbucker in the bridge position, a single-coil pickup at the neck and a coil-tap to split the configuration and multiply the tonal options. prsguitars.com

► Vela (left) and P245 Semi-Hollow



Istanbul Mehmet Tony Williams Tribute Cymbals

In an effort to capture the holy-grail cymbal sounds that Tony Williams achieved in Miles' Second Great Quintet, Istanbul Mehmet has released the limited-edition—only 250 sets—Williams Tribute Set. As the PR material explains, these 14-inch hi-hat, 22-inch ride and 18-inch crash cymbals are hand-hammered replicas of Williams' cymbals from that era. (Turkish-made K. Zildjians, to be exact, though the company can't and doesn't drop that name specifically in the literature.)

The replication involved no shortcuts, to say the least: According to the company, Williams' widow personally transported his cymbals to the factory in Istanbul, and even the cracks in the cymbals are reproduced in the quest for realness. The set includes a deluxe leather bag, along with a Certificate of Authenticity and collectible Williams photos. (\$1,950 online) istanbulmehmet.com



Mark Egan Signature Model Bass by Pedulla

The bassist Mark Egan has a new trio album out called *Direction Home* (Wavetone), featuring drummer Danny Gottlieb, whom Egan played with in the Pat Metheny Group, and keyboardist Mitchel



Forman. It's a bass-out-front recording but without the cloying pyrotechnics typically associated with the genre; it makes a very strong case for the bass as a melodic instrument without seeming to try too hard. If you're after those warm, engaging, almost flugelhorn-like tones, Pedulla has updated its Mark Egan Signature Model for limited-edition release, in honor of the company's 40th anniversary. The bass is a five-string with a body shape based on Pedulla's MVP (though its neck is thinner than the MVP's), and Bartolini pickups specifically designed for use in Pedulla basses. It also boasts, according to a press release, "greater than AAAA Flame Maple" and comes in fretted and fretless editions. (\$7,995 online) pedulla.com

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► "Impulsive, daring and bursting with creative energy": Fred Hersch

FRED HER SCH

SOLO (Palmetto)



Fred Hersch made his first solo piano recording in 1993. It was Volume 31 in Concord's *Maybeck Recital Hall Series*, which eventually reached 42 titles. Today, when solo jazz piano lacks this level of support, Hersch perseveres, a keeper of the flame. He has now made 10 solo albums, four of them live. Three of those, including this new one, are what Hersch calls "found objects." They come from concerts when he did not know he was being recorded.

Solo is a performance in the Windham Civic Center (once a church) in Windham, N.Y. Hersch is a naturally elegant, erudite improviser who thinks in terms of overall governing form. But on this night, his passion causes songs to spill free. He sounds impulsive, daring and bursting with creative energy. He plays like his hair is on fire. "Olha Maria" and "O Grande Amor"

are ecstatic outpourings loosely based on the harmonic and melodic aesthetic of Antonio Carlos Jobim. They are harder and denser than the versions on his 2009 solo album, *Fred Hersch Plays Jobim*.

A contrarian spirit rules the evening. "Caravan," no longer sinuous, becomes huge, blocky, irregular architecture. "The Song Is You" is improbably slow and reflective. Two Hersch originals are classical in their formality, yet extravagant. "Pastorale" is lush impressionism for Schumann. "Whirl," for Suzanne Farrell, is a vivid rendering of a ballerina in motion. Best of all is "Both Sides Now." Jazz interpretations of Joni Mitchell are common, but this one is special, alternately rapt and eruptive.

The risk with "found objects," recorded as archival documents rather than for release, is sound quality. The recording of *Solo* captures too much of the reverberant acoustic space of a former church. Hersch's piano is diffuse,

but that is greatly preferable to not having it, especially on a night this hot.

THOMAS CONRAD

DMITRY BAEVSKY

OVER AND OUT (Jazz Family)



There are now more important jazz musicians who hail from outside the continental U.S. than ever before. Take alto saxophone players. Two of the best, Francesco Cafiso and Miguel Zenón, are from Italy and Puerto Rico. Tineke Postma and Mattia Cigalini, from the Netherlands and Italy, belong on the list. So does Dmitry Baevsky, originally of St. Petersburg, Russia, now of New York.

Baevsky has chops that make other alto players consider finding another town. His extraordinary facility creates a sense of perfection in his solos, including those at very high speeds. The upside is that everyone appreciates a musician who makes hard things sound easy. The downside is that, since Baevsky is a logical and relatively conventional thinker, his music can lack the edge of win-or-lose risk that makes jazz exciting. Despite (or perhaps because of) his sheer competence, he can come off as predictable.

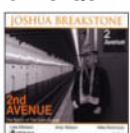
Over and Out is a recital. For the first time on record, Baevsky is alone with bass (David Wong) and drums (Joe Strasser). That his rhythm section players are unexceptional soloists is not a problem. Baevsky fills the trio's open spaces with voluminous alto saxophone intricacy. One reason the album feels like a recital is the repertoire. With obligatory thoroughness, Baevsky covers the bases: Ellington, Jobim, Monk. "Tonight I Shall Sleep (With a Smile on My Face)," "Chega de Saudade" and "Brilliant Corners" are very different tunes. They are fed into the saxophonist's creative process and come out as comparably meticulous Baevsky designs. The most intriguing track is an odd choice, "Stranger in Paradise." The song's normal bombast is modulated into oblique understatement.

It could be very interesting to hear Baevsky on a project that forces him out of his comfort zone.

THOMAS CONRAD

JOSHUA BREAKSTONE

2ND AVENUE: THE RETURN OF THE CELLO-QUARTET (Capri)



For decades, guitarist Joshua Breakstone has been a reliable purveyor of light, elegant bebop. On his last two albums for the Capri label, including this new offering, *2nd Avenue*, he has successfully experimented with a cello quartet that expands his métier into proper chamber bop. Because there are precious few forebears within this approach, Breakstone has now twice taken songs from the obscure 1960 LP *The Soul Society* by Sam Jones (who also played on the best-known cello-bop tune, "Work Song" by Cannonball Adderley). By using bassist Lisle Atkinson to bow the lead lines while cellist Mike Richmond plucks behind him, Breakstone offers a rendition of "Home" that is faithful to Jones' original. Richmond, like Jones, was originally a bassist who branched out into cello, and is thus naturally comfortable with pizzicato.

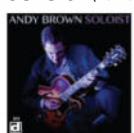
For Breakstone, who favors liquid phrasing and sophisticated interplay, the ability to braid and prance his stringed instrument alongside those of Atkinson and Richmond seems to be a tonic. On Atkinson's "Hit It," he pecks and strums chords behind the bass and cello and then drops a nicely dappled solo that is passed on to Richmond. There is also a segment where the final chords are harmonics first played by the cello, then the bass, then Breakstone.

Aside from replacing drummer Eliot Zigmund with Andy Watson, the personnel here is the same as Breakstone's 2013 disc, *With the Wind and the Rain*, which featured five trio tracks and four adding Richmond to make the cello quartet. *2nd Avenue* flips that equation, with five of the nine played by quartet, including an obscure Dexter Gordon song (that had Sam Jones on bass), "Evergreenish," and a delicious rendition of "I'm an Old Cowhand," which, like the Sonny Rollins and Grant Green versions, turns the novelty into sweet refinement. The best of the trio songs is a luminous treatment of the Sonny Clark ballad "My Conception." But next time let's hope Breakstone goes all-in with this quartet and includes the cello on every song.

BRITT ROBSON

ANDY BROWN

SOLOIST (Delmark)



When programming the selection of tunes on his latest CD, *Soloist*, Chicago-based guitarist Andy Brown couldn't have chosen a more enticing opener than his fingerstyle take on "Dancing in the Dark." Or a more telling one, for it certainly suggests pleasures to come.

Introducing the standard with an articulate and elegant touch, Brown crafts a consistently alluring performance. The rubato opening, the artful embellishments, the sleek improvisations, the subtle comping, the sparkling harmonics that light up the coda: All add to this opening cut's lyricism and charm—so much so, in fact, that there are times when the familiar refrain, or a light-fingered variation, seems to be dancing in mid-air.

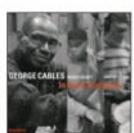
Brown counts Kenny Poole, Ted Greene, Cal Collins and Lenny Breau among his many inspirations, and their influence, whether subtle or striking, is felt throughout the album. Case in point: "Tango El Bongo," a winning salute to its composer, the late seven-string guitar legend George Van Eps. Its title notwithstanding, the tune is a showcase for serious musicianship. Following the master's lead, Brown adroitly shades or punctuates the now sunny, now soulful theme with basslines and chordal tints.

Apart from a robust take on George Wallington's "Godchild," this is strictly a fingerstyle affair, brimming with pop and jazz classics. Yet Brown's nimble dexterity and an abundance of imaginative, mostly off-the-cuff arrangements keep things interesting. Of course, when you're dealing with a solo jazz guitar album that features romantic Latin excursions and a wonderfully evocative reprise of the Gene Krupa-Roy Eldridge swing anthem "Drum Boogie," perhaps that goes without saying.

MIKE JOYCE

GEORGE CABLES

IN GOOD COMPANY (HighNote)



George Cables' title refers first to the pianist-composers he covers—John Hicks, Kenny Barron, Ellington and Strayhorn—and second to his trio with bassist Essiet Essiet and drummer Victor Lewis. The album's a cheery swinger, an exemplar of main-

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amazon music

stream piano jazz. In short, the kind of record Cables always makes. But it's his accompanists, and Victor Lewis in particular, that earn the titular salute.

Essiet records semi-regularly with Cables, and evinces an ability to disappear inside the pianist's rich left-hand chords and the architecture and tenderness of his touch, as on Hicks' "After the Morning" and Ellington's "Love You Madly." But Lewis has been with Cables for 15 years, and the album's second track, Cables' "Mr. Anonymous," plainly shows why. A bass ostinato bears down as Cables barrels over it with speedy single-note lines; underneath, Lewis lays out a cymbal-and-kick locomotion that's preternaturally steady. If the pianist is a runaway train, the drummer lays down tracks for it in real time.

Lewis' fingerprints are everywhere on *In Good Company*. His frequent accents shape Cables' "EVC" almost singlehandedly, and the upshot of rendering Strayhorn's poignant "Lotus Blossom" midtempo is to establish the ride cymbal as a playful foundation for Cables' improvisation. (It also gives Essiet a chance to shoot the breeze.) Lewis gets his own snappy solos on "It Don't Mean a Thing" and Kenny Barron's "Voyage," and space for his brushwork on "Lush Life" and "Day Dream."

The pianist shouldn't get short shrift; his lithe but thoughtful fingerings uplift every corner of *In Good Company*, and provide occasional surprises like the Monk-esque glissandi on "Lotus Blossom" and subtle syncopation breakdowns on "Naima's Love Song." Lewis simply shows himself to be Cables' equal—surely the best of company. **MICHAEL J. WEST**

STEVE DAVIS

SAY WHEN (Smoke Sessions)



What worked for J.J. Johnson will work for Steve Davis—that's the apparent logic behind *Say When*, Davis' competent but ultimately middling tribute to his and all bebop trombonists' forefather. Davis expresses in the liner notes his desire for the world to hear Johnson's music, but the strength of that desire paints him into a corner. The music is so thoroughly Johnson's that it neglects to be Davis'.

The trombonist has done fine work in the past, especially on his own writing. Here, his sextet (trumpeter Eddie Hen-

derson, tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Nat Reeves, drummer Joe Farnsworth) assays six Johnson compositions, along with two of his standard arrangements, an original tribute by Mabern and two tangentially related tunes. Davis' most inventive touch is to add a voice to the arrangement of "What Is This Thing Called Love?"; otherwise he plays them as Johnson did. Even the bitonal take on "When the Saints Go Marching In," easily *Say When's* most interesting moment, comes from Johnson.

For music that so inspires the leader, it never seems to inspire him here. "Pinnacles" finds Davis working J.J. licks and dry bebop lines. He begins his "Shortcake" solo by quoting "Blue Train," and nothing he plays after is so striking. The others do their best to buoy the session: Reeves and Farnsworth lay out their usual, preternaturally solid beat; Alexander lets gleeful coarseness invade his smooth lines on Mabern's 72-bar "Mr. Johnson"; Henderson keeps bebop fresh and spry on "What Is This Thing Called Love?" and "Kenya," and energizes Coltrane's "Village Blues" enough that Davis briefly sounds excited. Would that it lasted. **MICHAEL J. WEST**

WILD BILL DAVISON

THE JAZZ GIANTS (Sackville)



A new CD reissue of the 1968 inaugural release from Canada-based Sackville Records, *The Jazz Giants* is a collection of standards socked home with style and consummate professionalism by a hard-driving team of veterans. The band, recorded only this once, was assembled for a stand at Toronto's celebrated Colonial Tavern, but judging by the effortlessly intuitive groove they create, one could easily believe they'd been gigging together for decades.

Cornetist Wild Bill Davison, a long-time fixture in the Eddie Condon Orchestra, is the name above the title here, and his sharp yet muscular tone cuts through the proceedings like a lighthouse beacon. He wrings a defiant pathos from the Waller/Razaf chestnut "Black and Blue" (featured in both its original-release version and a previously unreleased alternate take), and on "I Found a New Baby," he growls and cries with titanic force. Fellow Condon vet Herb Hall's bouncy clarinet gives the music an understated ebullience,

and he eases forth gorgeous low-register tones on "Dardanella." Trombonist Benny Morton is a supple component of the sonic mix, while his solo on "I Would Do Anything for You" leaves a little bluesy gravy under your fingernails.

Pianist Claude Hopkins, the musical director for the Colonial gig and this recording session, is propulsive yet playful throughout, his galloping solo on the previously unreleased "Three Little Words" especially ear-catching. Hopkins finds able rhythmic support in the steady groove laid down by drummer Buzzy Drootin and bassist Arvell Shaw. A veteran of Louis Armstrong's All-Stars ensemble, Shaw just might be the standout of this recording; he wrenches the heart with his arco-driven lead on "Yesterdays," and his neck-snap solo on "Struttin' With Some Barbecue" is guitar-like in its deftness and heft. *The Jazz Giants* is old-school, nothing-but-swing jazz at its most enjoyable. **MATT R. LOHR**

AARON DIEHL

SPACE TIME CONTINUUM (Mack Avenue)



On pianist-composer Aaron Diehl's fourth album as a leader, his choices of both material and sidemen illuminate his recording's title: The 29-year-old from Columbus, Ohio, creates an environment in which historic and contemporary styles of jazz, as well as the Western classical tradition, are welcome and integrated. While the album is not especially piano-centric, fans of Diehl's exquisite touch, precise articulation and meticulous arrangements will be richly rewarded.

The six originals on *Space Time Continuum* reveal the influence of jazz forebears like Ellington, Bud Powell and John Lewis, an early role model to whom Diehl has been compared. Like Lewis, he draws on classical tradition; one is as likely to hear an echo of Rachmaninoff as of Ellington. As a pianist he's equally eclectic, reminiscent of Ahmad Jamal, Monk—and, occasionally, classical virtuosi.

The stellar sidemen include Diehl trio-mates David Wong on bass and Quincy Davis on drums, occasionally augmented by two legendary players, Benny Golson on tenor saxophone and Joe Temperley on baritone. The brilliant, breathy-toned tenorman Stephen Riley performs on two tracks, as does the ex-

citing young trumpeter Bruce Harris.

Despite the emphasis on originals, one of the album's high points is the opener, "Uranus," a spit-and-polish arrangement of the underperformed hard-bop standard by Walter Davis Jr. (recorded by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers in 1976); it sparkles in a crisp arrangement, with turn-on-a-dime phrasing. The noir-ish "Organic Consequence" features an eloquent, world-weary Golson solo. "Kat's Dance," written by pianist Adam Birnbaum, is a duo with Riley that begins like a jazz version of a Chopin nocturne, and it becomes a lilting setting for Riley to lean into the harmony in a quietly spectacular tenor solo. The frenetic "Broadway Boogie Woogie," commissioned by New York's Museum of Modern Art, is an interpretation of the famously busy Mondrian painting. Overall, a remarkably assured performance. **ALLEN MORRISON**

DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA

THE CONNY PLANK SESSION (Groenland)

 Unreleased Ellington studio sessions have a paucity to match the plentitude of his vault live releases, so this crafty little quickie—just 29 minutes—is something of a revelation. The unlikely setup: Duke in Cologne in 1970 to record for synth-maven engineer Conny Plank, a man accustomed to working with Kraftwerk rather than swing titans.

But it's fascinating to hear late-career Ellington go all experimental, embracing studio wackery. Of the two cuts here, meted out in alternate takes, "Alerado" has the surest form. It's akin to a bluesy, flute-infused African samba, as though Ellington's roots have enmeshed with Brazilian rhythms and commenced growing in Germany. One wonders how quickly the takes came after each other, if their approaches were much debated or decided on the fly. The first take is pastoral; the second has a more assertive ensemble that bucks up against Ellington's Jimmy Smith-type organ voicings; and the third is gutbucket hoodoo driven by Harold Ashby's tenor saxophone. This, clearly, is the Duke enjoying himself.

The three takes of "Afrique" could have been lifted from some bizarre land Can project. The first and best is pure

sound painting with sweeps of organ roiling atop a drum roll that is akin to some tribal summoning. Stabbing piano notes break in at intervals, like that needly percussion one encounters in noir films as someone creeps up the back stairs. The old Turk has gone young again.

COLIN FLEMING

SAMMY FIGUEROA

IMAGINARY WORLD (Savant)



After three albums co-billed with his band the Latin Jazz Explosion, percussionist Sammy Figueroa stands on his

own for *Imaginary World*. But not entirely—although his name graces the top of the album cover, a bit farther down it notes "featuring Silvano Monasterios & Gabriel Vivas," and that's important stuff. The Venezuelan pianist and bassist, respectively, each contribute four songs to the nine-track set, their compositions furnishing its direction, setting and overall tone.

Monasterios goes first, his four running consecutively. "Bittersweet" bursts to life with a cymbal crash, resounding bass and muscular tandem trumpet and saxophone, all of it anchored by Figueroa and drummer David Chiverton's rock-steady



DAVID BERKMAN

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW FRIENDS (Palmetto)



David Berkman should be more famous. In a jazz world where everyone wants to be a composer, Berkman was born one. He is a natural. The nine tunes here are new, but like all good songs, they sound like they have always been there. "Tribute," for Tom Harrell, moves with its own slanting, sideways step, always toward unfamiliar lyricism. "Past Progressive" and "West 180th Street" are quietly passionate, encompassing melodies. You do not so much listen to them as let them wash over you.

Bassist Linda Oh and drummer Brian Blade are a sophisticated, volatile rhythm team. Adam Kolker, Dayna Stephens and Billy Drewes play five different reed instruments. Berkman's piano flows through everything, in bright streams of intelligence. The solo firepower is formidable. "Tribute" contains a looping soprano saxophone effusion by Kolker and a halting, suspenseful tenor foray by Stephens. On "No Blues No Really No Blues," Drewes leads on alto but Kolker and Stephens are a choir of counterlines all around him. On "Deep High Wide Sky" and "Up Jumped Ming," Stephens, on tenor, is loose, powerful and personal. On "Past Progressive," three saxophones rotate, more intense with each turn. Oh, as articulate as any horn player, also gets major solo space.

But solos are woven into the organic, complete album concept of Berkman the composer-arranger. With all those reed instruments at his disposal, he creates a dedicated color palette for each song. The variations of three-woodwind harmony are vast. On "West 180th Street" and "Psalm," Berkman uses the reeds to create shifting orchestral backgrounds for his own lucid, precise piano.

In an album dependent on subtlety, nuance and refinement, it is enormously beneficial that the audio quality is so vivid and detailed. The overtones and decays of Blade's meaningful cymbals have never been better recorded.

THOMAS CONRAD



► "Quietly passionate, encompassing melodies":
David Berkman

foundations. Each of Monasterios' other three tracks displays a different disposition: "Waiting for You," a funk-driven danceability; "He Didn't Know," a wide-open breathiness; "Flow of the Universe," a highlight, a loosely structured juxtaposition of pianistic excellence, plucky saxophone from Troy Roberts and dizzying polyrhythms courtesy of Figueroa and Chiverton.

Vivas' first offering, "The Jumping Blue Jay," introduces for the first of two tracks guitarist Chico Pinheiro, whose swiftly rendered, adroitly framed lines provide a neat marker nuzzled between Alex Pope Norris' gutty trumpet and thunderous drums and percussion. The title track flirts with dynamic shifts, its most intriguing segment arriving midway as Monasterios pulls entirely unanticipated and exceedingly delicious sounds from his keys, and both "Alegria" and "Mysterious Energy" accord their author generous solo bass space.

That leaves the album-closing "Cuidado," composed by Marty Sheller and recorded by Mongo Santamaria, Poncho Sanchez and others. Figueroa and crew could have easily presented the tune via a traditional Afro-Latin arrangement. They don't, choosing instead to keep it of a piece with the rest of the program, a wise decision as it contains some of the brightest and brawniet playing on the record.

JEFF TAMARKIN

LASZLO GARDONY

LIFE IN REAL TIME (Sunnyside)



Life in Real Time, recorded live at the Berklee Performance Center in Boston last year, is both familiar and not. The familiarity comes from pianist Laszlo Gardony's coaction with his regular rhythm section, bassist John Lockwood and drummer Yoron Israel. The trio has proven, over more than a dozen years, to be uncannily compatible, and that's as true as ever here. Witness the early break in Gardony's "The Other One" (no relation to the Grateful Dead jam), a short but sweet bit of steady, bluesy swinging that gives Gardony just enough room to get a little fancy and free but stops short of asking for more.

The new ingredient in the formula comes from the three tenor saxophonists Gardony has invited along: Don Braden, Bill Pierce and Stan Strickland bring a

whole other vibe and discipline. As a collective the horns conspire to push the Gardony trio into places more rhythmic and less cerebral than it might head on its own. The opening "Bourbon Street Boogie" leaves no guesswork as to its inspiration: Gardony's brief Professor Longhair/Dr. John-esque intro ushers in a feisty feast of horns, Pierce and Braden's solos all about the party. "Gemstones" features stacked sax parts that ultimately give way to alternately industrious and contemplative solos from Pierce and Gardony, culminating in a free-for-all wind-down anchored by Lockwood and Israel.

Two standards, "Lullaby of Birdland" and "Motherless Children," nestled among the Gardony originals, again give each guest saxophonist spotlight time. As those three take their turns, the core piano trio is right there, locking the proceedings tightly into place. **JEFF TAMARKIN**

MICHAEL GIBBS & THE NDR BIGBAND

PLAY A BILL FRISSELL SET LIST (Cuneiform)
IN MY VIEW (Cuneiform)



Throughout Bill Frisell's prolific recording career, what goes around tends to come around, as youthful encounters and long-held fascinations inspire new studio projects and concert collaborations. Serendipity played a significant role in the guitarist's introduction to Rhodesia-born composer-arranger Michael Gibbs' music back in 1968. Frisell was hoping to see Wes Montgomery perform at Red Rocks in Colorado, but the guitar legend died a few weeks prior to the concert. The Newport Jazz Festival-produced program offered other enticements though. A performance by the Gary Burton Quartet made a profound impression on Frisell, who was immediately drawn to the Gil Evans-tinted harmonic approach within the Gibbs material the band played. In 1975 Frisell went off to study at Berklee, where, not coincidentally, Gibbs was teaching. The two have since become close friends and occasional, well-matched collaborators, as the NDR Bigband's recent release, *Play a Bill Frisell Set List*, colorfully illustrates.

The unenviable task of whittling Frisell's sprawling catalog into something manageable onstage for this 2013 Hamburg

concert—and something representative to boot—fell to Gibbs. Turns out that was the easy part, though. The biggest challenge lay in devising arrangements that consistently underscore Frisell's talents, as a player, composer and interpreter, while at the same time showcasing the Bigband's formidable soloists and wide-ranging dynamics. Fortunately, Gibbs' previous work with the Bigband, in similar "special guest" settings, serves him well. Playing a Telecaster-style guitar and abetted by guest drummer Jeff Ballard, Frisell is clearly inspired by Gibbs' handiwork, and the same holds true for the Bigband, as it moves through a series of passionate, painterly and exuberant performances.

Several tunes are drawn from recent (or semi-recent) Frisell releases. Among them is the swing-era delight "Benny's Bugle," which finds Frisell, Ballard and trumpeter Ingolf Burkhardt saluting Charlie Christian and company with light-footed, lighthearted aplomb. By contrast, "Throughout," a seminal Frisell composition, triggers an explosive opening salvo, mightily fueled by tenor saxophonist Christof Lauer. Frisell's "Freddy's Step," the album's joyously parading closer, is another highlight, generating waves of rhythmically skewed funk. The most compelling, fully realized ensemble performance, though, is Gibbs' insinuating treatment of the Evans-penned portrait "Las Vegas Tango." It proceeds from whisper to shout to bop-ish fade and segue. In stark contrast to orchestral colors and clout, the stealthy teaming of Frisell and Ballard on "Misterioso" punctuates the concert with a wonderfully evocative, Monk-meets-Raymond Chandler interlude.

"Misterioso" also appears on the Gibbs/Bigband's companion release, *In My View*. Yet, like most of the music arranged and conducted by Gibbs for this studio session, the treatment is colorfully expansive, designed to accommodate the ensemble's impressive roster of soloists. In this instance, drummer Adam Nussbaum and trombonists Dan Gottshall, Sebastian Hoffmann and Stefan Lottermann help infuse the Monk tune with a jolt of Crescent City swagger. In similarly kinetic fashion, the ensemble brings surging hard-bop drive to Ornette Coleman's "Ramblin'" with alto saxophonist Peter Bolte leading the way. Carla Bley is also affectionately represented, via her noir-ish vignette "Ida

Lupino," and rounding out the session are four diverse compositions by Gibbs that radiate a signature blend of lyricism and verve. **MIKE JOYCE**

MARK GUILIANA JAZZ QUARTET

FAMILY FIRST (Beat Music)



Recent generations of drummers have reshaped the role of percussion in the small jazz ensemble. They include people like Mark Guiliana, Antonio Sanchez, Dave King, Eric Harland and Justin Brown. These drummers share scary chops, outright aggression and musicianship that keep them (just barely) from overwhelming their bands. The most erudite among them improvise trap-set scores for Oscar-winning films (Sanchez, for *Birdman*) or become significant bandleaders and label founders.

Guiliana launched Beat Music Productions in 2014. His first two releases, *My Life Starts Now* and *Beat Music: The Los Angeles Improvisations*, were as different as composed and spontaneous albums can be. Yet both contained belligerence, noise, electronics, raw funk and blatant disregard for genre.

Now comes *Family First*, the debut of an acoustic quartet with standard instrumentation: Jason Rigby (saxophones); Shai Maestro (piano); Chris Morrissey (bass). Nothing else about it is standard. Guiliana sounds like Tony Williams filtered through Dave Grohl. His band plays advanced postmodern freebop with a garage/grunge sense of license. "One Month" opens with irregular drumbeats into which Maestro inserts irregular chords. Over this jagged foundation, Rigby, on tenor, starts in slow, plaintive calls and suddenly turns frantic. "ABED" would be straight swing with a ride pulse except it keeps changing velocities. "2014" is a yearning ballad constantly threatened by Guiliana's dark rumbling. "From You" is a long, burning, convoluted line traced by Rigby, interrupted by cryptic piano interludes that spill free. Rigby and Maestro, under-the-radar players, are brilliant on this record.

Guiliana the drummer continuously generates compelling, complex content in which violence and quietude reasonably coexist. Guiliana the composer creates complete, detailed, wildly diverse conceptions. Still, "Johnny Was," the only cover, makes you wish for more. Hearing Bob

EDDIE CONDON & BUD FREEMAN

COMPLETE COMMODORE AND DECCA SESSIONS (Mosaic)



This latest Mosaic juggernaut—eight discs and a mere 199 cuts—doubles as a bulwark against easy labels, which is how one imagines banjoist/guitarist/ringleader Eddie Condon would have wished it. Teamed with tenorman Bud Freeman, and working with ensembles kitted out with one stud soloist after another, this is jazz via the New Orleans collective approach, then shot through with Chicago-style solo panache and brought to New York as the choicest uptempo amalgam.

The material ranges from 1938 to 1950, and while the sprawling expanse of most Mosaic packages means you'll usually encounter a duff patch or two, everything is of a piece here. The units are loud and loaded for bear, the dominant fettle being all-out fun. Condon was an underrated soloist, but it's his rhythm work that impresses throughout, right from the opening "Love Is Just Around the Corner," a showpiece for clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, with the bulk of the beat coming from Condon's vigorous comping. One gets the sense that it was his enthusiasm that fired these assorted workouts, as if his extramusical contributions were just as important as the audible ones. This set also provides an opportunity to re-evaluate Freeman, who boasts an enormous sound and smooth tone. His playing can be very Chu Berry-like, robust yet even, as on a September 1939 rendition of "As Long as I Live," which features an impeccable sound balance for this vintage. (Hard, in fact, to fathom it dating before WWII, but there it is.)

Come the spring of the next year it was experimentation time, with the Modernistic conceit of attempting to capture a jam session of "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" over four 12-inch 78s. There's a decent amount of clutter—we're talking an orgy of solos here—but a Joe Marsala alto spot plays beautifully against an organ backdrop, and the bewitchingly consistent Russell pulls the slack parts together.

Condon was the chief proselytizer for what became known as Nicksieland Jazz, so named for Nick's Tavern in Greenwich Village, where he and his cohorts cut loose, and as such he was a master blender of talent. A mid-November 1940 date features pianist Fats Waller, someone whose presence, like that of Art Tatum's, was so commanding that he could be hard to incorporate into a group structure. No problem, though, with the Condon gang. "Georgia Grind" is a perfect blues setting for Waller who, not surprisingly, delights in trading flourishes with Russell.

And then there is the January 1946 date with Bing Crosby joining the Condon ranks. "After You've Gone" finds Freeman's saxophone acting as foil for Crosby's vocal, the latter posing its own horn-like qualities as the former easily dips into singsong mode. Come July of that year, we have Gene Schroeder's piano providing its own make of Condon-esque rhythm on "Some Sunny Day," which also features a ramped-up, tricky drum part from Dave Tough. Even better, kit-wise, is the



► "Loud and loaded for bear": Eddie Condon (far left) and friends in New York, c. 1942



Christmastime 1943 romper "Oh, Katharina," with the painfully under-recorded Big Sid Catlett having one of his finest moments, flashing the full monty of his considerable technique and chops. Give the drummer some, give everyone some, with this lot.

COLIN FLEMING

Marley's song affirmed with the merciless mindset of Giuliana's quartet is special fun. **THOMAS CONRAD**

HEADS OF STATE

SEARCH FOR PEACE (Smoke Sessions)



These four elder statesmen of postbop—Gary Bartz, alto and soprano saxophones; Larry Willis, piano; Buster Williams, bass; and Al Foster, drums—had crossed paths many times but never played together as a quartet before an engagement last fall at New York City's Smoke, organized as a tribute to McCoy Tyner. On their first outing as a band, their

high degree of musical telepathy makes them sound like they've been playing together for years.

A collective consciousness oozes from these tracks, echoes of the giants with whom they apprenticed, including Tyner, Miles, Monk, Jackie McLean and Sonny Rollins, among others. The album features two songs associated with Tyner, Coltrane's "Impressions," which gets the album off and running on a modal groove, and Tyner's ruminative "Search for Peace." But there's much more, including two Bartz originals, tunes by McLean and Benny Carter, and three well-chosen standards.



GIOVANNI GUIDI TRIO

THIS IS THE DAY (ECM)



Behind *This Is the Day*'s scrim of subtlety, the Giovanni Guidi Trio quietly plays hell with the piano-trio format. Most of the time, drummer João Lobo neither keeps nor accents the beat—he plays free. Bassist Thomas Morgan occasionally plays accents, but is more likely to focus on obbligato or melody. It is up to Guidi, the pianist, to maintain (or imply) a pulse, even as he establishes and improvises on the tunes. It's music of great audacity, even brilliance.

Even more than the classic Bill Evans trios, Guidi's is a piano trio with a nominal leader. Morgan, for example, remains high in the mix at all times, rivaling the pianist and often taking control of the ensemble. Guidi hands the reins to the bassist immediately on "Carried Away," Morgan beginning the performance with a nearly minute-long unaccompanied solo on the 39-bar fantasia. They often seem to alternate roles within the same track; the elegiac "Where They'd Lived" first finds bass shadowing the flowing piano solo, then vice versa, even including a crossover section that puts the instruments somewhere between call-and-response and counterpoint. On "Quizas Quizas Quizas" the trio comes close to playing it straight, until Guidi and Morgan begin interacting such that it's hard to tell who's the improviser and who's the supporter.

As for Lobo, he often seems to recede from his cohorts; unlike them, he takes no solos. But his freeform accompaniment is crucial. It brings a near-occasion of chaos to "I'm Through With Love," scattering itself until the otherwise cohesive performance seems perpetually on the brink of entropy. When Guidi himself breaks free on "The Debate," Lobo (and Morgan, somewhat) scampers alongside like a dog chasing a car. *This Is the Day* is a bold subversion, the kind that demands further study.

MICHAEL J. WEST

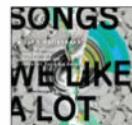


► "Music of great audacity, even brilliance":
Giovanni Guidi

First among equals here is Bartz, whose warmth and eloquence on saxophone put his highly individual stamp on the record. As critic Ted Panken recounts in the liner notes, Bartz is a firm believer in the principle that to play a standard well, one must learn the lyrics, and the fruits of that approach are apparent in an exquisite reading of "Crazy She Calls Me," the ballad famously recorded by Billie Holiday. Willis, whose style mixes modalism and a rough-hewn impressionism, solos with delicacy and grace on the title track. McLean's "Capuchin Swing," which reworks the distinctive changes to the ballad "Star Eyes," offers the pleasure of hearing Bartz, Willis and Williams navigate them with aplomb. Foster and Williams play with the restraint and lyricism that have distinguished their careers. Herein lie lessons not available in any jazz studies program. **ALLEN MORRISON**

JOHN HOLLOWBECK

SONGS WE LIKE A LOT (Sunnyside)



Songs I Like a Lot was one of 2013's best records and one of the most majestic albums of the 21st century. Arranger and bandleader

John Hollenbeck nearly created an entirely new genre by blending big-band music and pop songs with modern classical sensibilities, oddball vocal arrangements and cinematic sweep. Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman" and "The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress" never sounded so gorgeous. The whole album was experimental, quirky and phenomenally enjoyable.

The sequel, *Songs We Like a Lot*, is only experimental and quirky. Hollenbeck applies the same concept to another seven songs but comes up with an unlistenable mess. Novelty becomes cliché, and the album winds up feeling like a collection of rejects—or maybe parodies—from the initial session.

Most of the same characters return, including the Frankfurt Radio Big Band with vocalists Theo Bleckmann and Kate McGarry; the difference is that Uri Caine replaces Gary Versace on keyboards (except on one song). Six of the seven tracks run between seven and 12 minutes, and mostly they're too long, growing monotonous and overbearing. The only short tune—if you want to call it a tune—is a ridiculous reworking of Daft Punk's "Get Lucky" with

lyrics performed in Russian by a computerized voice. You just want it to end.

Soft vibes introduce Pete Seeger's "How Can I Keep From Singing," as Hollenbeck monkeys with both the melody and the rhythm; the busy arrangement intertwines McGarry's and Bleckmann's vocals, but it turns into a showtune nightmare. A minimalist arrangement of the Cyndi Lauper hit "True Colors" is completely unrecognizable but for the over-the-top, lily-gilding finale that arrives after nearly 10 minutes of nerve-jabbing pizzicato piano and percussion. Hollenbeck sets a Rumi poem, delivered by McGarry as spoken word, to music for "Constant Conversation," whose Middle Eastern theme grows annoyingly repetitive.

McGarry's attractive vocals save a cover of the Carpenters' "Close to You," but it too wears out its welcome. The grand finale, a version of the Fifth Dimension's "Up, Up and Away" that has all the subtlety of a jackhammer, will send your pets running from the room. Unlike the masterpiece that preceded it, *Songs We Like a Lot* is overwrought and impressed with its own conceit. There's such a thing as too much grandeur. **STEVE GREENLEE**

JAGA JAZZIST

STARFIRE (Ninja Tune)



If Return to Forever in their chopsiest, synth-heaviest incarnation had continued evolving into the age of electronic dance music, they'd sound much like Norway's Jaga Jazzist. Even their newest album's title, *Starfire*, suggests RTF and their ilk. But on their seventh full-length, the chops and synths are really Jaga Jazzist's only remaining connection to jazz. The rest is a series of multilayered vamps, mesmerizing in their way but also mind-numbing.

Like much dance music, *Starfire's* melodies are all but nonexistent. The title track is a panoply of drones, riffs and obligati; even the breaks on "Big City Music" are collages of recycled motif. And there is certainly little to no improvisation. The harmonies embrace convention; the rhythms are insistent and deceptively simple. (Drummer Martin Horntveth loves flash, but his sixteenth notes on "Oban" merely obscure a backbeat.)

Instead, the brothers Horntveth—Jaga Jazzist's core—get their jollies from the

introduction and interaction of contrasting timbres. Often the contrasts are between synthetics and organics: On the delicate "Shinkansen," Andreas Mjøs' acoustic guitar strumming is sandwiched between dreamlike electronic tendrils, with Line Horntveth's flutes soon entering on top and entangling itself in further electronics. On "Prungen," there's a bit of faux-Indian raga alternating with thudding drums and synthesizer distortion.

But none of it maintains interest for long; though new elements are constantly introduced, they almost immediately settle into ruts that rely on contrast with the next new element. Even when they display high energy, which is often, *Starfire's* five tracks are all ultimately their own brand of drone. They can invoke a trance, perhaps a pleasant one, but not the kind that encourages jazz lovers' active listening.

MICHAEL J. WEST



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KU-UMBA FRANK LACY & THE MINGUS BIG BAND

MINGUS SINGS (Sunnyside)



Perhaps more than any other modern jazz composer, Charles Mingus presents a challenge to anyone attempting a tribute album. His wit, musical depth and larger-than-life personality all factored into his writing, making his music difficult to do justice to. Not that it's

impossible. *Weird Nightmare*, the Hal Willner-directed tribute from 1992, featured a far-flung cast and the use of composer Harry Partch's oddball instruments, and it mostly succeeded, despite its overambitious nature. Cornetist Kirk Knuffke and pianist Jesse Stacken's *Orange Was the Color*, a duets album from 2011, stuck with Mingus' more melodic works.

Ku-umba Frank Lacy understands the challenges of the territory and raises

the stakes even higher by crafting an all-vocal set of Mingus tunes, a genre in which the bassist didn't primarily operate. Normally a trombonist, Lacy has the ideal voice for this program, combining a gravelly sincerity (and a bit of a lisp) with a rich, deep quality that adds drama to the heavier moments. The backing of the Mingus Big Band, of which Lacy is a bedrock, ensures that the arrangements bear the mark of the composer; the ensemble uses Mingus' original charts or those by longtime associate Sy Johnson.

The lyrics come from a variety of sources. "Weird Nightmare," "Eclipse" and "Portrait" should be familiar to Mingus-philes, and Lacy delivers on their poetic intrigue. Sue Mingus penned words for "Moonlight," a lush piece that was never previously recorded, and she captures her husband's essence. Less successful are the tracks from Joni Mitchell's Mingus collaboration, which feel facetious, especially the wordy "Dry Cleaner From Des Moines." Elvis Costello contributes two sets of lyrics, but lines like "It's hard to wake up with your silly, cracked crown" ("Invisible Lady") come off as too highbrow for the setting. Yet when the band kicks into high gear, all is forgiven.

MIKE SHANLEY

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BRIAN LANDRUS TRIO

THE DEEP BELOW (BlueLand/Palmetto)



Multi-instrumentalist Brian Landrus continues to assert the low woodwinds' vitality on his trio outing *The Deep Below*. Joined by bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Billy Hart, who previously backed Landrus on the 2011 quartet recording *Traverse*, Landrus displays formidable chops as both a composer (he wrote or co-wrote 11 of this album's 14 tracks) and a virtuoso on baritone saxophone and three bass instruments: sax, clarinet and flute.

The music of *The Deep Below* is malleable, with endlessly complex colors. Landrus gives the Sinatra classic "I'm a Fool to Want You" a perceptive balladeer's touch, then reframes Coltrane's "Giant Steps" as a hurtling bari solo, barely glancing off the

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tune's melodic line. On "Open Water" a bottom-scraping solo bass clarinet morbidly evokes churning currents, and the winsome "Just a Fading Memory" finds the instrument recorded with such tender clarity that Landrus' fingering and inhalations are thrillingly audible. Currently a classical-composition PhD candidate at Rutgers, Landrus' long-haired leanings are most vividly present on "Ancient," one of two Landrus-Plaxico compositions; here, the wandering bass flute conjures images of arcane ruins and long-dead secrets. The album's bass sax feature, "The Beginning," finds Landrus navigating the big horn with the dexterity with which less-sturdy saxophonists handle a soprano.

Landrus' bandmates match their leader's rhythmic intricacy and aggression throughout. Hart's polyrhythmic effusions zig when you expect them to zag, and his near-telepathic communication with Plaxico is mesmerizing, most notably in their multilayered harmonic interplay on the other Landrus-Plaxico original, "Fly." The bassist's fascinatingly fragmented sense of time shores up the exotic clenched-breath effect of "Fields of Zava," and his sparsely thumped single notes and echoey arco groans galvanize the almost brutally intense "Once Again." *The Deep Below* couldn't be more aptly titled; this is music that aims for the gut, and hits hard.

MATT R. LOHR

MIKE LEDONNE

AWWRIGHT! (Savant)



Fans of vintage soul-jazz organ combos are not only likely to concur with the title of keyboardist Mike LeDonne's latest release, they may even find the album worthy of an additional exclamation point or two. It's soulful, Hammond B-3 stuff, all right, from top to bottom and chorus to chorus, with plenty of thoroughly evocative solos spread out between the riffing themes and time-honored resolutions.

Though the after-hours mood is in keeping with LeDonne's long-running Groover Quartet engagement in Manhattan—at Smoke, on Tuesday nights—this studio session is occasionally enhanced by the knowing input of bassist Bob Cranshaw, on five-string

electric, and trumpeter Jeremy Pelt. Starting with the LeDonne-penned opener, the album's title track, it's clear that the bandleader intends to take full advantage of the expanded lineup, and the same holds true when the sextet robustly reprises "Let It Go," yet another example of composer Stanley Turrentine's deep pocket.

Mostly, though, the quartet, featuring versatile drummer Joe Farnsworth, is left to its own considerable devices. The band

is in fine, fully resonating form, with LeDonne's horn-inspired jabs adding some large-ensemble heft to a series of performances that always benefit from tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander's authoritative stance and bop-bred fluidity. Evoking a big man who is uncommonly light on his feet, Alexander's tone is at once imposing and nimble. Guitarist Peter Bernstein also knows the value of dynamic shadings, and though there are numerous examples here of his subtly

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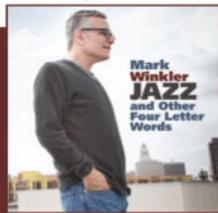
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expressive artistry, his contribution to LeDonne's minor-key vignette "Mary Lou's Blues" helps make for a particularly haunting interlude. **MIKE JOYCE**

JASON MILES & INGRID JENSEN

KIND OF NEW (Whaling City)



First things first: *Kind of New* is informed not by Miles Davis' 1959 *Kind of Blue* but rather the electric music of *Bitches Brew* onward. Jason Miles, a keyboardist who worked with Davis on a few of his later projects, explains in his introductory essay that Keith Jarrett's Rhodes work with the trumpeter provided the inspiration for this exploration. But that still isn't modern enough to describe what's happening here aesthetically: This is music crafted in the spirit of late Miles Davis, but it's very much of its own time.

Jason Miles couldn't have found a more simpatico partner for the outing than trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, an intrepid, propulsive—and mighty funky—player. They survey several styles and tempos: "The Faction of Cool" moves gently and deliberately, Miles more Jimmy Smith than Jarrett under Jensen's understated lines. But other cuts are burners: "Close to the Action" and "Street Vibe," the latter co-written by Miles and Tom Harrell, are among several tracks that also spotlight saxophonist Jay Rodriguez; both go deep-groove immediately and firmly, giving Jensen ample opportunity to blow tough.

"Seeing Through the Rain," co-written by and featuring Jeff Coffin on saxophones, also unfolds unhurriedly, a vaguely tropical sway at its core; it features Cyro Baptista's percussion and doubles up on the drummers and bassists. Wayne Shorter's "Sanctuary," which closed out *Bitches Brew*, is all waves, bursts and flutters. For obvious reasons it's the most evocative of Davis' early electric sound, full of revelations. Yet, like the rest of *Kind of New*, it's kind of now. **JEFF TAMARKIN**

MARIO PAVONE

BLUE DIALECT (Clean Feed)

In "Language," each member of the Mario Pavone Trio takes a little more than a minute for a meterless unaccompanied solo, following the quick, arrhythmic staccato theme. Drummer Tyshawn Sorey creates low thunder across the toms. Pavone plucks wildly at his bass. Pianist Matt Mitchell uses the whole range of his instrument, keeping things pensive rather than heavy. This track comes two-thirds of the way through *Blue Dialect* and is the most linear example of Pavone's writing for the trio. Coupled with the title, it appears to offer an examination of the players' thought processes. Throughout the rest of the album, the proceedings sound knotted. It's not quite as dense as *Fiction*, Mitchell's 2013 album of piano exercises, but it feels almost as busy.

Not that *Blue Dialect* is impenetrable. The energy flows, unabated, throughout the album, with final track "Blue" bringing the set to a final boil. Sorey continues to be one of the most exciting drummers in modern jazz, using his whole kit to propel the band. Mitchell is an unending flow of ideas, frequently harmonizing in a way that implies an additional instrument. Pavone alternately anchors the group and moves freely throughout his compositions.

At the same time, it's often hard to latch onto any idea the group is trying to communicate; discerning the theme from an improvisation throughout these nine tracks is a challenge even during focused listening. In a sense, "Trio Dialect," which is credited to all three players and presumably a group improvisation, contains nearly as much clarity as many of the composed tracks. There is no denying the rapport among these players, but taken in one sitting, the waves of sounds can overwhelm.

MIKE SHANLEY

LUIS PERDOMO & CONTROLLING EAR UNIT

TWENTY-TWO (Hot Tone)



Luis Perdomo comes to *Twenty-Two* in a mood for a look back. After more than a decade as a founding member of Miguel Zenón's longstanding quartet, a

concurrent lengthy run with Ravi Coltrane and a half-dozen strong releases of his own, the pianist has built his intriguing new trio album on compositions inspired by memories of his move to New York 22 years ago from his native Venezuela.

Joining Perdomo are his wife, Mimi Jones, on bass and Rudy Royston on drums, both of whom offer supple support and make good use of their several opportunities to solo. Jones shines even brighter when she makes like Esperanza Spalding and adds wordless vocals to

her bass work on "Aaychdee." But the focus is mostly on Perdomo's prowess on acoustic and electric piano. He's reminiscent of Chick Corea on the best of the electric pieces, "Looking Through You" and "Cota Mil" (named for a traffic artery in Caracas). The acoustic pieces reveal different sides of Perdomo as composer and interpreter. "Love Tone Poem" and "Weilheim" (for his first piano teacher, Gerry Weil) have clean, classical feels to them. "Old City" seems to have inherited some of its DNA from the

TERELL STAFFORD

BROTHERLEE LOVE: CELEBRATING LEE MORGAN (Capri)



Lee Morgan's status as one of hard bop's masters of the trumpet is beyond question, but his gifts as a composer have perhaps never been given their due. Fellow brass man Terell Stafford's tribute collection, *BrotherLee Love*, produced by bassist John Clayton, stands as a corrective to this slight, its foregrounding of Morgan originals providing an enjoyable reminder that there is much more to Morgan's songbook than just "The Sidewinder."

Seven of the album's nine tracks are Morgan compositions, and from the vigorous samba beat of "Mr. Kenyatta" to the slow-boil balladry of "Carolyn," Stafford's quintet runs the gamut of rhythmic and melodic riches. Stafford and tenor saxophonist Tim Warfield turn the melodic line of "Petty Larceny" into a skirling blues fanfare, and Dana Hall's pops-and-snaps drumbeats are just the ticket for the aggressive bebopper "Stop Start." Stafford, fortunately, is never content to merely copy Morgan's vibe. He rips through the changes with the grit and speed of his honoree, but his playing has a warmth and generosity all its own, particularly on the album's sole standard, Alex Kramer's playfully seductive "Candy" (Stafford breaks out the mute for this one). "Favor," Stafford's compositional contribution to *BrotherLee Love*, is like fine whiskey, mellow but with bite; pianist Bruce Barth's bluesy block chords give it just a touch of churchiness.

Stafford and Warfield blend beautifully as melodic accompanists, the latter's solo on "Yes I Can, No You Can't" exuding a suave, masculine grace. Barth, Hall and bassist Peter Washington understand exactly what blues-driven jazz



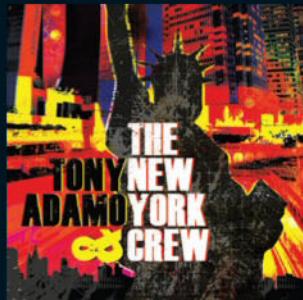
► "Just the kind of tribute Lee Morgan would have appreciated": Terell Stafford



like this needs from its rhythm section and acquit themselves beautifully. (Washington's elastic behind-the-beat solo on "Hocus Pocus" is an album high point.) *BrotherLee Love* is just the kind of tribute Morgan would have appreciated: Like the man himself, it cuts the BS and gets down to business.

MATT R. LOHR

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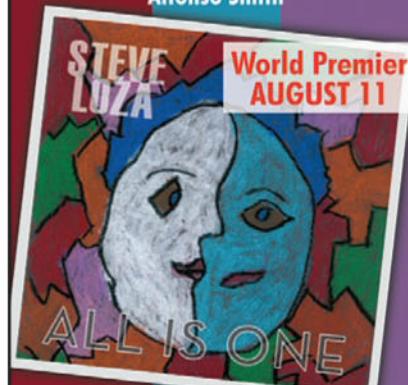
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Miles Davis tune "Nardis," a favorite of Bill Evans. "Two Sides of a Goodbye" and the very short "Light Slips In" are more abstract, and Perdomo reshapes the lone cover, the Bee Gees hit "How Deep Is Your Love," into a thoughtful ballad.

The disc's hard-charging penultimate track, "Brand New Grays," begins slowly before breaking into a sprint, Perdomo nimbly alternating electric and acoustic piano, as if trading solos with himself. "Days Gone Days Ahead" evokes reflective glances back while striding surefootedly forward, a fitting end to this superb musician's midcareer pause to take stock.

BILL BEUTLER

STEVE SLAGLE & BILL O'CONNELL

THE POWER OF TWO (Panorama)



You've heard the expression about there being "strength in numbers." In the case of Steve Slagle and Bill O'Connell's *The Power of Two*,

Two, two is quite enough, which is to say that alto saxophonist and flutist Slagle and pianist O'Connell are an ensemble—and a powerful, forthright one at that. Both play aggressively and with secure rhythm, so much so that you don't miss bass and drums. Slagle has a commanding tone and strong sense of drive on both of his instruments; likewise, O'Connell cooks like a big band behind him and throughout his own solos.

Slagle and O'Connell, together veterans of various Latin-jazz ensembles, join forces here to honor the late pianist Kenny Drew Jr., Slagle having performed with Drew in the Mingus Big Band. Slagle's originals include "KD Jr," a warm remembrance; "Good News," a catchy descending melody; "One Life," which opens with a gospel-ish piano intro and vaguely recalls Ellington's "Come Sunday"; the title tune, evocative of Ornette Coleman and Monk; the ballad "Into Your Grace"; and "Whistling Spirits," a brief, spacy collaboration with O'Connell.



JEFF "TAIN" WATTS

BLUE, VOL. 1 (Dark Key)



Modern jazz rarely gets as flat-out eclectic as it does on this latest Jeff "Tain" Watts offering. The opening "Brilliant Corners" is one of the most confident, strutting takes on Monk you'll hear, Watts' kit powering the track with impressive snap and pop, a de facto rhythmic conductor. Sections surge, tempos double, and even a master of perpetual wending like Monk would have to cede this as a logical extension of his complex logic.

"Farley Strange" marries a vocal about gumbo with a thick electronic sheen, a sort of Creole-vibe crossed with a sensibility out of mid-period Radiohead. "Diva Man" has a gravelly vocal from Ku-umba Frank Lacy suggestive of Blind Willie Johnson, which dovetails nicely with the following "Blues for Mr. Charley," a classic pre-dawn, post-booze construct that commences with a souped-up dirge figure that transitions to Moseby-esque swing courtesy of Troy Roberts' tenor work.

The beats here are large, and Watts, as ever, stuns with his drum work, but there are calligraphic touches too, as with the racing synth lines in "May 15, 2011," inky sonic traceries that provide hue, contrast and balance to what might have been an otherwise cluttered soundscape. "Flip & Dip," meanwhile, has a drum solo that does just that, a composition unto itself housed.

COLIN FLEMING

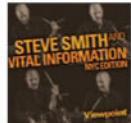


► "The beats here are large": Jeff "Tain" Watts

O'Connell's lone original is "A New Day," a romping workout for piano and alto. Slagle's flute appearances include Bill Evans' "Peri's Scope" and Dave Brubeck's "The Duke." On flute, he displays dexterous technique not usually associated with the instrument; on alto, he offers fiery expressiveness. As for O'Connell, he's ideal as both a soloist and an accompanist. **OWEN CORDLE**

STEVE SMITH & VITAL INFORMATION NYC EDITION

VIEWPOINT (BFM Jazz)



Steve Smith and Vital Information are renowned, successful commodities. Smith has been named one of the top 25 drummers of all time by *Modern Drummer* magazine, and Vital Information, the ensemble Smith began in 1983 when he was still in Journey, has for decades been an enjoyably high-octane amalgam of fusion jazz laced with funk-rock grooves.

But for those who favor more straight-ahead jazz, *Viewpoint* features an important twist. This is the "NYC Edition" of Vital Information, which grafts on members of Smith's other ensembles, Jazz Legacy, and the Buddy Rich tribute band Buddy's Buddies. Pianist Mark Soskin replaces Tom Coster and Andy Fusco is added on alto saxophone, transforming VI from a quartet to a quintet. The changes are immediately apparent when Soskin bangs out the familiar intro to Thelonious Monk's "Bemsha Swing" on acoustic piano. Sure, Soskin eventually switches to Fender Rhodes while the band hammers on the tune's sturdy riff. But then two of the next three songs investigate the Rich songbook, with Rich alumnus and tenor saxophonist Walt Weiskopf arranging and rollicking with Fusco on the frontline for "Time Check" and "Willowcrest." Later on, Soskin, who spent many years with Sonny Rollins, leads a splendid rendition of Rollins' classic "Oleo," and there is a sparkling version of the Desmond/Brubeck chestnut "Take Five" with guitarist Vinny Valentino at the forefront.

Longtime fans of Smith's bottom-heavy fusillade of beats will gravitate to the drummer's three solo interludes, but the throwback material doesn't hinder him either—check his torrid 35-second solo to open "Time Check," or his pyrotech-

nics on "Oleo." The rubber-and-steel rhythmic foundation of bassist Baron Browne is another signature sound of Vital Information that ferociously retains its standing in the mix. Smith, who has past associations with Ahmad Jamal and Wadada Leo Smith as well as Journey on his résumé, proves here that words like "fusion" and "vital information" can be delightfully flexible.

BRITT ROBSON

GRANT STEWART

TRIO (Cellar Live)



Working with Paul Sikivie on bass and brother Phil Stewart on drums throughout *TRIO*, tenor saxophonist Grant Stewart exhibits a big, direct tone and, in his solos, a knack for motivic development along with strategic melodic reminders of the tune at hand.

While the piano-less format may suggest freer, avant-garde-leaning proceedings, Stewart's approach is as straight-ahead as ever, and save for "Uranus" by Walter Davis Jr. and "Time to Smile" by Freddie Redd, the tunes are well-known standards. Still, Stewart manages to take advantage of the harmonic open air.

The program opens with "Time to Smile" at a medium tempo, wherein Stewart works out with melodic variations and sequences that demonstrate his inventiveness as well as his fidelity to the tune. Sikivie solos with a fat tone and percussive attack, and tenor and drums trade fours. Later in the set we hear an uptempo "Everything's Coming Up Roses" with all the players locked in sync and cooking. "I'll Never Be the Same," one of the album's three ballads, is easygoing, with Stewart serving up a musing but swinging solo. The medium-tempo "Uranus" offers empathetic, reactive tenor-and-drums interplay.

OWEN CORDLE

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dedicated to "the victims of violence in Colombia caused by the ongoing conflict between guerrillas, paramilitary groups and the national army."

The octet here includes leading figures of the current genre that mixes Latin jazz with edgy New York improvisation: trumpeter Michael Rodriguez, saxophonist Yosvany Terry, trombonist Marshall Gilkes. Torres' suite is founded on *bullerengue*, and to pursue the fervent polyrhythms of this Colombian folkloric form he uses three sources of percussion: his own congas, Obed Calvaire's traps and Jonathan Gómez's five Colombian instruments.

The opening "Overture" is quiet, ominous drums, horns blended in a somber minor key and a simple theme like a moan of sadness. "Niño Pensante" also begins with the dark communal ceremonies of three drummers, before the ensemble enters like a sigh. "El Silencio Desplazador" beautifully recasts, in deeply layered voicings, the core motif introduced in "Overture."

But not all of the suite is funereal. In tunes like "Las Cantaoras," Torres celebrates the life force inherent in Colombian folk culture. Gilkes, Terry and Rodriguez all burn on this track. "Narrador de Espejismos" and "El Orgullo del Tambor" commemorate, ferociously, the courage of a people who find creative ways to resist oppression. The heart of Torres' suite is rhythm, so it is appropriate that he takes "Final" to himself for five minutes. After his flowing conga dissertation, the full ensemble materializes and softly reiterates the haunting motif that opened this rich, powerful album.

Torres is a percussionist with a genuine gift for piercing melody and provocative harmony. *Forced Displacement* takes its place with other great jazz odes of protest and mourning, like Amina Figarova's *September Suite*, Charlie Haden's *The Ballad of the Fallen* and Toshiko Akiyoshi's *Hiroshima*. **THOMAS CONRAD**

WAYNE WALLACE LATIN JAZZ QUINTET INTERCAMBIO (Patois)



Wayne Wallace is a fine trombonist but a better bandleader, and an exceptional conceptualist. His ingenious knack for re-contextualizing bop standards using

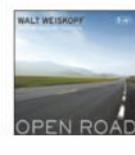
Latin idioms, or simply splicing cultures guided by his instincts and imagination, turns the song list on *Intercambio* into a steady series of surprises that are each distinctively delightful. Miles Davis' "Solar" opens and closes with three vocalists and a driving clave rhythm. John Coltrane's "Equinox" features flute, violin and trombone passages (separate and together) orbiting around the *bata* drum, taking the blues-inflected theme into an Afro-Cuban finale. Dizzy Gillespie's "Algo Bueno" (a.k.a. "Woody n' You") is spun into a Puerto Rican *bomba* with Trinidadian steel drum. A four-trombone frontline moves with deft grace on a Latinized version of J.J. Johnson's "Shutterbug," and thickens the already creamy hooks that made Hoagy Carmichael's "Heart and Soul" a pop hit in multiple decades.

As you may have deduced, the billing of Latin Jazz Quintet refers just to the core ensemble players who are on every track. Eight of the 10 songs feature at least eight musicians and two Wallace originals go well beyond that. The first, "Guarachando," is a tribute to the street parades of Mardi Gras and Carnaval, with a raft of brass, percussion, and vocals sliding in and out of the spotlight, gilded by the piquant tones of flute, violin and steel drum. The second, "Timbazo," mates Cuban *timba* music with the taut beats of James Brown-style funk.

Wallace's liner notes are informative about his intentions, but the music also speaks for itself. "Como Vai," for instance, is helpfully described as a mash-up of the Cuban cha-cha and the Brazilian samba, but more viscerally, it is a wonderful spot to go swimming through David Belove's enormous basslines. In the end, the head, the heart and the feet all get nourished on *Intercambio*. **BRITT ROBSON**

WALT WEISKOPF

OPEN ROAD (Posi-Tone)



If you love a top-notch tenor saxophonist playing at full throttle, *Open Road* will make you giddy. A stalwart veteran in his mid-50s, Walt Weiskopf does not have the notoriety his combustible talent deserves. He started

as an adjunct, toiling in large ensembles for Buddy Rich and Toshiko Akiyoshi and playing behind Frank Sinatra and Steely Dan. After a couple of discs with his pianist brother Joel, he released a spirited string of records for Criss Cross, but they weren't really lean and mean—a couple were nonets, others had fragrant stylists like pianist Brad Mehldau and organist Larry Goldings—until *See the Pyramid* put him with a rhythm section featuring pianist Peter Zak in 2010. *Open Road* repeats that formula to glorious effect, with Zak, drummer Steve Fidyk and bassist Mike Karn buckled in for a thrill ride.

Weiskopf uses just the right elements from the very best role models to inform his style, meshing the kinetic modulations of John Coltrane with the lyrical imagination and tonal dare-devilry of Sonny Rollins. The dozen songs on *Open Road* alternate between untethered hard-bop burners (the odd-numbered tracks) and more gently rambunctious (even-numbered) tunes. These more reflective yet still feisty songs include two covers (Jimmy Van Heusen's "Nancy [With the Laughing Face]" and the ballad "Angel Eyes"), tributes to Weiskopf's wife ("Let's Spend the Day Together") and son ("Tricycle"), and a filtering of "Autumn Leaves" through Walt Whitman ("Leaves of Grass").

Good as they are, they can't match the adrenaline that occurs when Weiskopf clusters crisply articulated notes into breakneck phrases, as on "Premonition," "Open Road" and "Electroshock," downshifting into extended notes that linger with sharpened intensity then pivot into another gust. "The Gates of Madrid" may contain the most beautiful, uplifting gust, and the opening riff on "Invitation to the Dance" is the most memorable table-setter, while "Chronology," for Weiskopf's father, is perhaps the most garrulous of the burners. When they are all through, your senses still tingle. **BRITT ROBSON**

KENNY WERNER

THE MELODY (Pirouet)



The Pirouet label out of Germany has established itself as a haven for pianists of staunch scholarship possessing

an exquisite touch. Few fit that description better than Kenny Werner, who literally wrote the book on creativity—*Effortless Mastery* is his well-regarded tome. The rhythm section Werner mentored to fruition, bassist Johannes Weidenmueller and drummer Ari Hoenig, has been with him on a half-dozen trio discs over the past 15 years. The duo has released a number of its own instructional music books and videos over the year, such as *Metric Modulations: Expanding and Contracting Time Within Form*.

Not surprisingly, then, *The Melody* rewards learned listening. This is a trio whose telepathy is backed by a library of shared knowledge and method. It is well over two minutes into the disc before Werner fully reveals that the opening number is the off-Broadway hit "Try to Remember," but the three musicians are in sync and most of the ruminations in the prelude make their way back into the mix, along with a seemingly left-field quote from the calypso "St. Thomas." In a similar fashion, the affectionate intro Dave Brubeck gave to "In Your Own Sweet Way" is scrapped in favor of something brisk and impulsive, the staccato, stabbing notes akin to an implacable "new classical" work until Werner abruptly dives into Brubeck's melody. Yet 30 seconds later he's back on the more antic path, eventually shifting back and forth more readily until the two motifs converge into a brisker Brubeck. Coltrane's "26-2," from the late '50s, is rendered straight and playfully, with its harmonic complexity intact and Hoenig enjoying the same sort of primacy afforded Elvin Jones in the original.

Among his four originals, Werner chooses to reprise two sparkling title tracks from his past discs—"Beauty Secrets" (from 2000, the first time he recorded with Hoenig and Weidenmueller) and "Balloons." Both feature durable melodies, which of course the trio tinkers with like Rubik's Cubes. **BRITT ROBSON**

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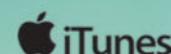


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► "Amplifying Gil Scott-Heron's profundity": Charenee Wade

CHARENEE WADE

OFFERING: THE MUSIC OF GIL SCOTT-HERON AND BRIAN JACKSON (Motéma)



As producer Mark Ruffin explains in the liner notes, *Offering* is an apologia of sorts. Across his multi-decade career as broadcaster and journalist, Ruffin often crossed paths with Gil Scott-Heron. His knowledge of, and appreciation for, Scott-Heron's work is arguably unsurpassed. Four years ago, Ruffin was working with vocalist Giacomo Gates on an album of Scott-Heron material. Its release overlapped with Scott-Heron's untimely death and was, says Ruffin, wrongly recognized as a eulogistic tribute. The high quality of the Gates disc notwithstanding, Ruffin has wanted to shape a proper farewell ever since. Though the project was funded via Kickstarter, he jests that its true "kick-starter" was his introduction to vocalist Charenee Wade.

The majesty and might of Scott-Heron's poetry, whether raised in protest or wrapped in hope, suits Wade well (and vice versa), her vocal style melding the suppleness of Dianne Reeves with the spirit of Abbey Lincoln. Drawing on Scott-Heron's most fertile period through the 1970s, she and Ruffin choose wisely, shaping an impressively balanced playlist: The spiraling darkness of "Home Is Where the Hatred Is" and common-goals ethos of "Ain't No

Such Thing as Superman" are offset by the gently uplifting "Song of the Wind" and better-tomorrows anthem "I Think I'll Call It Morning." The project's high points conjoin Wade's vocals with spoken-word passages—Malcolm-Jamal Warner on the rallying cry "Essex/Martin, Grant, Byrd & Till" and Christian McBride on the tenderly unifying "Peace Go With You Brother"—that, in their polar-opposite ways, amplify Scott-Heron's profundity.

TONY CIMOROSI & SAUNDRA SILLIMAN

DUOTONES (Epoch)



Saundra Silliman may be the best-kept secret in jazz. As both a vocalist and actress, she's been gigging around New York since the mid-1980s and has performed with the likes of Herbie Hancock and Lonnie Plaxico. But apart from a few MP3s on her outdated website, this brief (eight tracks spanning just 30 minutes) union with seasoned bassist Tony Cimorosi seems to represent her debut album.

With Cimorosi opting for elegant but decidedly low-key accompaniment, Silliman is exposed in the spotlight, but she is fully up to the challenge. Her voice suggests the richness of Sarah Vaughan tempered by the charming modesty of Maxine Sullivan. Her phrasing is as crystalline as Nancy Wilson's.

The program is an intriguing one,

with Silliman gently poking into corners both dark and light while mixing dusty standards with more contemporary covers. Her laidback, ruminative style is ideally and equally suited to the silken moralizing of Sting's "Fragile," the arid loneliness of "Slow Hot Wind" and the indigo regret of "Key Largo." She also deftly navigates more complex narratives, including the everyman yin-yang of the Stylistics' "People Make the World Go Round" and bittersweet idolization of Mingus and Joni Mitchell's "Good-bye Pork Pie Hat." Interpretively speaking, Silliman falters only once: On "Autumn in New York," a song that demands mink-lined enchantment, she is oddly somber, more world-weary than exhilarated.

GIACOMO GATES

EVERYTHING IS COOL (Savant)



A latecomer to jazz as a vocation, Giacomo Gates cut his first album 20 years ago at age 45 and has since recorded just six more as a leader. But what he lacks in quantity he's more than made up for in quality. A fervent acolyte of bebop, scat and vocalese masters, Gates has dotted his albums with tributes to such heroes. *Everything Is Cool* marks his deepest dive into their collective songbooks, including selections by such seminal figures as Babs Gonzales, Oscar Brown Jr., Jon Hendricks and Frank Rosolino, with Brubeck and Monk added for good measure.

As he enters his mid-60s, Gates' phrasing has grown a little looser, his range narrower. Still, he remains one of the finest interpreters around, fully on par with Mark Murphy and Kurt Elling. Oddly, given the album's focus on intrepid vocal adventurers, Gates plays it straighter than usual, adding only the occasional scat chorus and just one meaty vocalese, stretching the center of Monk's "Well, You Needn't."

Gonzales is provided the most attention, Gates covering three of his tunes, including the breezy, Jimmy Van Heusen-worthy title track. Rosolino's "Please Don't Bug Me" is a vengeful delight, while Timmie Rogers' bluesy "If I Were You, Baby, I'd Love Me" (written for Nat Cole) recalls the laidback sophistication of Matt Dennis. Most curious (and perhaps coolest of this ice-cool set) is "All Alone," a bitter slice of beat-poetry payback written by comic legend Lenny Bruce in 1958, after his wife left him.

ELLEN JOHNSON

FORM & FORMLESS (Vocal Visions)



It's hardly surprising that Ellen Johnson was specially selected by Bobby McFerrin to work with his Voicestra ensemble. When it comes to shaping wordless gems, Johnson packs as imaginative a wallop as the mighty McFerrin. An accomplished jazz educator, Johnson was herself taught, at least in part, by Sheila Jordan. (Johnson returned the favor by writing the excellent Jordan biography *Jazz Child*, released last fall.) Jordan's influence, particularly her fearlessness, is strongly felt across all 10 of these tracks, all crafted as duos with alternating guitarists John Stowell and Larry Koonse. Half are free improvisations, the majority with Stowell. The others, most with Koonse, are built upon classics from the Monk, Coltrane, Rollins and Mingus songbooks.

Working without a net, Johnson traverses the static calm of "Fiona Flanagan's Fable" (curiously reminiscent of the military call "Taps"); the gentle lope and swirl of "Corky's Caper"; the metronomic undulation of "3-Lonious Bunk"; and the whooping, shamanistic "Nolan's Notorious Nocturne" (named for guest trumpeter Nolan Shaheed). Her takes on standards are less overtly adventurous yet equally inventive, and include a staccato "Nature Boy"; a cloudy "Round Midnight" featuring Babs Gonzales' alternate lyrics; an updated take on "St. Thomas" reset with Johnson's delightfully tropical (and Rollins-sanctioned) lyric; and a prayer-like drift across Coltrane's "Naima."

ARIEL POCOCK

TOUCHSTONE (Justin Time)



With its pairing of a neophyte vocalist-pianist with four jazz heavyweights, this album might better have been titled *Post-Millennial All-Stars Featuring Ariel Pocock*. Not that the 22-year-old Floridian can't hold her own in the company of tenor saxophonist Seamus Blake, guitarist Julian Lage, bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Eric Harland. Indeed, she is gifted well beyond her years. Her vocal style suggests an amalgam of two other precocious talents, Nikki Yanofsky and Kat Edmonson, both of whom seem to have vacated jazz in favor of more pop-centric

careers. Blending Yanofsky's sanguinity with Edmonson's dreamy detachment, hers is a dynamic, slightly scorched voice that is deeply jazz-steeped. She's as impressive at maneuvering the tricky curves of Monk and Bob Dorough as she is navigating the densely powerful storytelling of Randy Newman and Tom Waits. Pocock's keyboard skills are just as mature, whether exploring the pastoral calm of Keith Jarrett's "Country" or anchoring her own "Barrel Roll," seven minutes of chameleonic dynamism.

But Pocock never positions herself as the front-woman. *Touchstone* is an album of equals, of profound mutual respect, of generously shared spotlights. The soft bed that Grenadier and Harland shape beneath her interweaving of "Ugly Beauty" and "Still We Dream"; how Harland so masterfully supports Blake's solo on "Devil May Care" and sets the steady heartbeat that propels the romantic ache of Lage's guitar on James Taylor's "You Can Close Your Eyes": Those are just three among a spectrum of examples of the quintet's estimably deferent interplay.

SHAYNA STEELE

RISE (Ropeadope)



She's backed Moby, Bette Midler and Kelly Clarkson, performed on Broadway, toured with Rihanna, recorded an EP and a full-length disc under her own steam and been hailed as an "R&B diva." As she's carved this circuitous path, Shayna Steele has also acquired significant jazz cred, working alongside the likes of Dave Douglas and Snarky Puppy, who included her catchy "Gone Under" on their *Family Dinner, Volume 1*.

Now, for her sophomore album, Steele seems bent on bringing that kaleidoscopic wealth of experience crashing together. Across 11 tracks anchored by her longtime musical partner and husband, pianist David Cook, but also featuring such jazz A-listers as Christian McBride, Marcus Miller and Eric Harland, she ventures from gossamer folk to hard-driving rock, adding generous dollops of jazz and soul, and even a hint of country, along the way.

Steele's playlist includes just three covers: a soul-deep rendition of Bill Withers' "Grandma's Hands," a charmingly insouciant reading of Fiona Apple's "Paper Bag" and a thundering, Muscle Shoals-worthy

reworking of Mose Allison's "Everybody's Cryin' Mercy." On the eight originals, all co-written with Cook and including Steele's own blistering treatment of "Gone Under," she can be slyly sexy ("I Got You"), bouncily ebullient ("Sunshine Girl"), gloriously self-possessed (the Aretha-worthy "Coulda Had Me") and ferociously penitent ("Wear Me Down," featuring Robert Randolph). Broadening her circle of jazz playmates, she also offers a stunning duet with Sachal on her aching "Can't Let You Go," delicately trimmed by Grégoire Maret on harmonica.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

BESSIE: MUSIC FROM THE HBO FILM

(HBO Films/Legacy)



In May, when HBO premiered *Bessie*, starring a sharply cast Queen Latifah as blues legend and vocal-jazz pioneer Bessie Smith, the company ensured it was as truthful as it was entertaining. The same high standards extend to the soundtrack. Latifah dominates the album, filling seven of its 17 tracks with her gutsy interpretations of such Smith gems as "Young Woman's Blues," "Work House Blues" and "Long Old Road." Smith, whose rise to superstardom predated the advent of microphones, was a classic blues shouter. Latifah, though more soulful than blues-steeped, effectively transforms her style, emulating not only Smith's rafter-rattling prowess but also her sly way with a lyric.

The balance of the soundtrack interweaves delights old and new. Period material from Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller and lesser-known songstress Sippie Wallace (serving up the coquettishly risqué "I'm a Mighty Tight Woman") has been painstakingly remastered. Purists might object to the inclusion of Kid Ory's update of "Ballin' the Jack," recorded in 1954, 17 years after Smith's death, but the track feels right at home. Among the contemporary contributors, vocalists Tamar-kali and Carmen Twillie winningly invade the songbook of Smith mentor Ma Rainey, while Cécile McLorin Salvant adds a coy rendition of "Laugh, Clown, Laugh" that sounds freshly plucked from 1928. And, at disc's end, Smith herself makes an appearance, technologically twined with Latifah on a rollicking "Gimme a Pigfoot and a Bottle of Beer." **JT**

► "Navigating the narrow channel between swing and freedom": Branford Marsalis



BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET

COLTRANE'S A LOVE SUPREME: LIVE IN AMSTERDAM (OKeh/Marsalis)



Branford Marsalis' 2002 album, *Footsteps of Our Fathers*, which included his quartet's

recitation of John Coltrane's four-part suite *A Love Supreme*, drew mostly favorable reviews, though at least one critic (*ahem*) found it stiff, emotionless and unnecessary. Fifteen months after recording *Footsteps*, however, the Branford Marsalis Quartet gave a performance of *A Love Supreme* at an Amsterdam concert hall that amounted to a stunning tour de force. Originally released on DVD in 2004, that concert has been reissued as a CD/DVD set to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Coltrane's watershed recording.

The quartet—Marsalis exclusively on tenor saxophone, with pianist Joey Calderazzo, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts—is more spirited,

more powerful and more expansive than on the studio recording. The suite runs significantly longer here, as the quartet stretches each movement out. The band's trademark style, deftly navigating the narrow channel between swing and freedom, reminds us why Marsalis-Calderazzo-Revis-Watts was one of the most dangerous, exciting combos in jazz.

Concert DVDs often add little to the experience of hearing the music, but that's not the case here. The cinematography is incisive, with beautifully composed images and tight shots (especially of Calderazzo's hands) that add a new dimension even for fans who saw this group live many times. (The CD and DVD contain the same music.)

A rumble of mallets on toms introduces part one, "Acknowledgement." Marsalis blows an elegant, expressive statement, and when Revis plucks those four familiar bass notes, the audience erupts. Four minutes in, Marsalis unleashes a torrent of notes while Watts, one of jazz's most forceful drummers, thrashes furiously, though his facial expression implies that it takes him little effort to do so. He is in a zone.

DVDs

Revis solos sparsely between movements, and then Marsalis states the well-known theme of part two, "Resolution," bending notes dramatically. Calderazzo—who watches each of the other members intently, looking for cues—turns in his first major solo of the evening here, beginning tastefully but growing faster and faster until eventually his hands are a blur. After several minutes, Marsalis returns and constructs a wall of sound with arpeggios and rapid-fire scalar runs.

A long drum solo—Watts just stares straight ahead, at nothing, while his arms flail—segues into part three, "Pursuance." After a brief statement by Marsalis, the rhythm section engages in a battle of wills. Calderazzo's fingers fly at break-neck speed, and the viewer can't help wonder how his brain can possibly direct his hands at such a pace. (To hear improvisation on record or even in a jazz club is one thing; to see such crisp close-ups is quite another.) Finished—or tired—Calderazzo and Revis lay out, and Marsalis and Watts duel in a manner that recalls Coltrane's explorations with Rashied Ali.

Part four, "Psalm," starts with Revis soloing unaccompanied, sweat dripping off his head. Then comes the reverential final statement, and Marsalis grows increasingly volatile, like a hurricane gathering steam. Against a backdrop of thunderous mallets, and without the "a love supreme" chant of Coltrane's original, the quartet pushes toward its rapturous conclusion.

The DVD contains bonus material, but unfortunately it's not worth watching. Musicians—not just the quartet members, but others such as Miguel Zenón, David Sánchez and the late Michael Brecker—talk about *A Love Supreme*, and an interview that Marsalis conducts with Coltrane's widow, the musician and composer Alice Coltrane, is amateurish. The only interesting part of the bonus footage is an unguarded moment backstage after the Amsterdam show: Marsalis is ecstatic over the performance and reveals that the previous night's show wasn't up to par because it lacked emotion. "Anybody can play the notes," he says. That was exactly the trouble with *Footsteps of Our Fathers*, and its existence illustrates why this evening was so magical.

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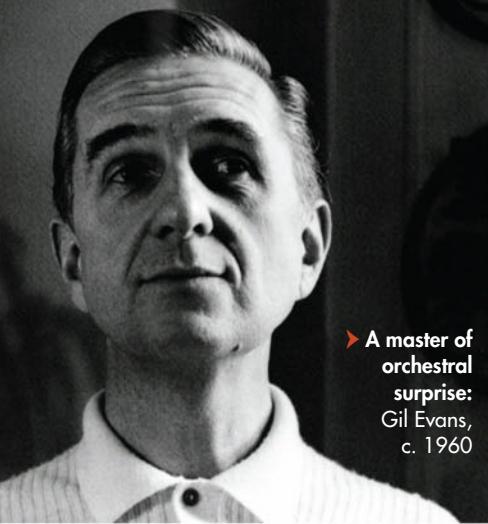


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► A master of
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HIDDEN GEMS OF GIL EVANS

BY RYAN TRUESDELL

Many listeners' knowledge of Gil Evans begins and ends with his collaborations with Miles Davis. With 25 years of music on either side of those historic albums, there is a wealth of Evans' genius that is often overlooked. By delving into his music from before and after those seminal collaborations, including material for other artists, we can more fully appreciate the scope of his composing and arranging style. I hope these "hidden gems" inspire you to explore more of Gil Evans' remarkable discography.

Claude Thornhill & His Orchestra

"HANG OUT THE STARS IN INDIANA" (Evans, arranger)
The Transcription Performances 1947 (HEP, 1999)

Evans was a master at utilizing the element of surprise. I love how he has the band play a whole chorus by itself, slightly re-harmonizing each A section, adding a little more chromatic dissonance as the tune progresses. After two minutes, when you are convinced this is an instrumental arrangement, Evans surprises you with a modulation that brings in the vocalist.

The Teddy Charles Tentet

"YOU GO TO MY HEAD" (Evans, arranger)
The Teddy Charles Tentet (Atlantic, 1956)

It is remarkable how every moment of this arrangement seems fresh and new, given how economic Evans is with his writing. The instrumentation is so spare: five horns (trumpet, alto, tenor, bari, tuba) and five rhythm (vibes, guitar, piano, bass, drums), yet at times you could swear there's a big band playing. He shifts the orchestration every few measures, and there is hardly a moment without some melodic or secondary line driving the composition onward.

Helen Merrill

"HE WAS TOO GOOD TO ME" (Evans, arranger)
Dream of You (EmArcy, 1957)

This was the first album Evans wrote charts for in its entirety, and one of the only recorded instances of his writing for strings. At that time, strings in jazz were mostly used as "pads" (long, held-out chords outlining the harmony), but Evans treats them very differently. He has them in closed voicings moving linearly, creating a forward momentum within the inner workings of the arrangement. It's also worth noting that, in his quest to create unique orchestral colors, Evans arranged this for tenor violin, three violas and cello.

Marcy Lutes

"CHEEK TO CHEEK" (Evans, arranger)
Debut (Decca, 1957)

The first four rubato chords just scream "Gil Evans." The rest of the arrangement showcases Evans' voice from this period perfectly—swinging, quirky, harmonically adventurous—and creates a wonderful backdrop for Lutes' voice. Notice the similarities between the ending of this arrangement and that of Evans' arrangement for "Springville" from *Miles Ahead*. I love hearing examples of how he adapted and developed his own ideas. It gives us a glimpse into his creative process.

Gerry Mulligan Sextet

"LA PLUS QUE LENTE" (Evans, arranger)
The Fabulous Gerry Mulligan Sextet: Complete Studio Sessions 1955-1956 (Fresh Sound, 2006)

I like how Evans gives this piece a tango feel—compare it to Debussy's original waltz—and how he passes the melody around to different instruments throughout the arrangement. This is a good example of Evans' use of triads, and how moving them in parallel or contrary motion to the lead voice creates a wonderful linear flow. This piece is particularly special to me since it's the only recording of my teacher Bob Brookmeyer playing one of Evans' arrangements.

Lucy Reed

"A TROUT, NO DOUBT" (Evans, arranger)
This Is Lucy Reed (Fantasy, 1957)

One of the fascinating things about this track is the instrumentation: two woodwinds (alto flute and bassoon), tenor violin, trombone, bass trombone and rhythm section. It's a seemingly motley crew, yet in Evans' hands it's capable of unusual colors and a surprisingly big sound. This arrangement is also a great example of how Evans can make something extraordinary out of an otherwise frivolous pop song. The ending is perfect: the same 12-tone row he later used for the opening of "The Meaning of the Blues" on *Miles Ahead* (borrowed from Berg's *Violin Concerto*), with a slightly augmented quote of "The Sailor's Hornpipe" in the piano.

Astrud Gilberto

"I WILL WAIT FOR YOU" (Evans, arranger)
Look to the Rainbow (Verve, 1966)

This arrangement is just stunning. Evans places each phrase so intentionally, rarely starting or landing on the downbeat, and this creates some ambiguity with the time, giving the arrangement a floating, dreamlike quality. The climax of the chart is when trumpeter Johnny Coles comes in and Evans sets up his solo with a spectacular modulation. It gets me every time. Modulation is such a powerful tool, one that is tragically underutilized by modern composer-arrangers. **JT**



Ryan Truesdell is a celebrated composer, arranger and copyist based in New York. He is best known as the leader of the Gil Evans Project, a Grammy-winning repertory ensemble whose latest release is the live album *Lines of Color* (ArtistShare).

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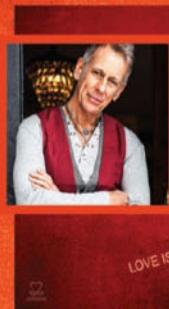
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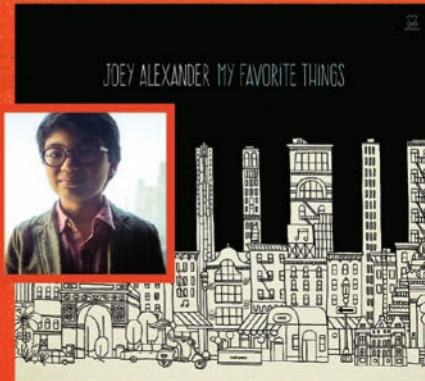
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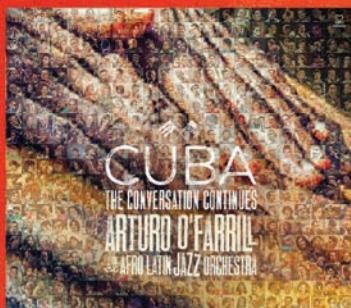
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